

Selected and Edited by E. BRADLEE WATSON and BENFIELD PRESSEY

CONTEMPORARY DRAMA

15 plays

Hedda Gabler	HENRIK IBSEN
The Importance of Being Earnest	OSCAR WILDE
Uncle Vanya	ANTON P. CHEKHOV
The Dream Play	AUGUST STRINDBERG
Man and Superman	BERNARD SHAW
Riders to the Sea	JOHN M. SYNGE
"Henry IV"	LUIGI PIRANDELLO
Ah, Wilderness!	EUGENE O'NEILL
Blood Wedding	FREDERICO GARCÍA LORCA
Murder in the Cathedral	T. S. ELIOT
Purple Dust	SEAN O'CASEY
The Skin of Our Teeth	THORNTON WILDER
Come Back, Little Sheba	WILLIAM INGE
The Crucible	ARTHUR MILLER
Look Homeward, Angel	KETTI FRINGS



CONTEMPORARY DRAMA
FIFTEEN PLAYS



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

Contemporary Drama

FIFTEEN PLAYS

AMERICAN
ENGLISH AND IRISH
EUROPEAN



Selected and Edited by
E. Bradlee Watson

DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

and Benfield Pressey

DARTMOUTH COLLEGE



CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
NEW YORK

COPYRIGHT © 1959 CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

COPYRIGHT 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1938, 1941
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

All rights reserved. No part of this book
may be reproduced in any form without the
permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

B-8.60[V]

Printed in the United States of America

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Page vii constitutes an extension of the copyright page.

Uncle Vanya reprinted from *Plays* by Anton P. Chekhov, translated by Marian Fell (1912). Used by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

Murder in the Cathedral by T. S. Eliot, copyright 1935, by Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.

Look Homeward, Angel by Ketti Frings. Used by permission of Edward C. Aswell on behalf of the Thomas Wolfe Estate, and Ketti Frings. © 1958 Edward C. Aswell as Administrator C.T.A. of the Estate of Thomas Wolfe and/or Fred W. Wolfe and Ketti Frings.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS (*continued*)

Hedda Gabler reprinted from *The Collected Works of Henrik Ibsen*, Vol. X, translated by Edmund Gosse and William Archer. Copyright 1907 by Charles Scribner's Sons; renewal copyright 1935 by Frank Archer. Used by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

Come Back, Little Sheba by William Inge, copyright 1950 by William Inge. Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.

Blood Wedding by F. García Lorca. Copyright 1945 by James Graham-Lujan and Richard L. O'Connell. Copyright 1947 by New Directions. Reprinted by permission of New Directions.

The Crucible by Arthur Miller. Copyright 1952, 1953 by Arthur Miller. Reprinted by permission of The Viking Press, Inc. All rights reserved: no public or private performance of the play, professional or amateur, may be given, no film, radio or television use or public reading, without authorization from the author's representative, MCA Management, Ltd., 598 Madison Ave., New York 22. For permission to reprint excerpts from the play, address The Viking Press, Inc., 625 Madison Ave., New York 22.

Purple Dust by Sean O'Casey. Copyright 1940. Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

Ah, Wilderness! by Eugene O'Neill, copyright 1933 by Eugene O'Neill. Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.

"*Henry IV*" from *Three Plays* by Luigi Pirandello. Copyright, 1922, by E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.; renewal, 1950, by the Estate of Luigi Pirandello. Reprinted by permission of the publishers.

Man and Superman. Copyright © 1903 by George Bernard Shaw. Renewal Copyright 1931 by George Bernard Shaw. Used by arrangement with Dodd, Mead & Co., Inc.

The Dream Play reprinted from *Plays* by August Strindberg, First Series, translated by Edwin Björkman (1926). Used by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

Riders to the Sea from *The Complete Works of John M. Synge*. Copyright 1935 by The Modern Library, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.

The Skin of Our Teeth by Thornton Wilder. Copyright 1942 by Thornton Wilder. Used by permission of Harper & Brothers.

FOREWORD

This collection should meet the needs of two kinds of teachers: those who wish to introduce students to modern drama by means of an adequate number of great plays, but do not require that these plays be placed in time or theatrical history; and those who do wish to give a minimum conception of how dramatic technique has changed and varieties widened since the rejuvenation of drama began with Ibsen. To be found here are plays by the greatest authors of the modern period whose work is complete: Ibsen, Shaw, O'Neill, Chekhov, Pirandello, Synge, Strindberg, Wilde, Lorca. No historical study of the modern drama can omit any of these. But many of the plays here are by authors from whom much can still be expected: Eliot, Wilder, O'Casey, Miller, Inge, Frings. Three of the plays are from the decade of the 1950's, and one has been most recently awarded the Pulitzer Prize at the time of publication. We have tried hard in this collection to make a workable compromise between history and up-to-dateness, and we think we have succeeded.

The teacher who is privileged to give a semester course in the drama since Ibsen, however, will not find this volume alone adequate. We hope such a teacher will consider combining this volume with our Nine-Play and Eleven-Play volumes in the CONTEMPORARY DRAMA series. In the Nine-Play volume he will find dramas by Rostand, Barrie, Galsworthy, Čapek, Maugham, O'Neill, Rice, Howard and Sherwood; in the Eleven-Play volume, by Shaw, Saroyan, Connelly, Wilder, Coward, Anouilh, Tennessee Williams, Giraudoux, Hellman, Miller, and Fry. We believe the three volumes together would make a very illuminating survey of the modern drama, with four plays from the decade of the 1890's; four from the first decade of the twentieth century; two from the decade of the First World War; five from the 1920's; seven from the 1930's; ten from the 1940's; and three from the 1950's. Of these thirty-five plays, fifteen are American, eleven English or Irish, and nine European.

Three texts in this volume perhaps call for comment. *Purple Dust* follows the form in which it was played in New York, according to Mr. O'Casey's wish. By the kind permission of Mr. Eliot, part II of *Murder in the Cathedral* begins with both Chorus and Priests, as in the latest English editions. *Man and Superman* is presented complete, as Bernard Shaw wished it to be read, with Epistle Dedicatory, the third act, known in separate presentation as *Don Juan in Hell*, and The Revolutionist's Handbook, as well as the play as customarily acted.

In making this volume, we did not need to try for variety in either theme or technique, for it comes without trying in any collection of modern drama. We found it easy to think of and try to obtain for this collection works of intellectual

distinction, for the modern period is rich in them. We have tried to include works that hold the stage or seem likely to. All these plays are theatrical in the sense that theatricality is demanded in plays. The modern drama is delightful to teach and to study, and we hope that teachers and students who use this volume will enjoy it.

E.B.W.

B.P.

CONTENTS

<i>HEDDA GABLER</i>	<i>Henrik Ibsen</i>	3
Translated by Edmund Gosse and William Archer		
<i>THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST</i>	<i>Oscar Wilde</i>	43
<i>UNCLE VANYA</i>	<i>Anton P. Chekhov</i>	73
Translated by Marian Fell		
<i>THE DREAM PLAY</i>	<i>August Strindberg</i>	97
Translated by Edwin Björkman		
<i>MAN AND SUPERMAN</i>	<i>Bernard Shaw</i>	129
<i>RIDERS TO THE SEA</i>	<i>John M. Synge</i>	240 /
<i>"HENRY IV"</i>	<i>Luigi Pirandello</i>	248
Translated by Edward Storer		
<i>AH, WILDERNESS!</i>	<i>Eugene O'Neill</i>	278
<i>BLOOD WEDDING</i>	<i>Federico García Lorca</i>	329
Translated by James Graham-Lujan and Richard L. O'Connell		
<i>MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL</i>	<i>T. S. Eliot</i>	354
<i>PURPLE DUST</i>	<i>Sean O'Casey</i>	379
<i>THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH</i>	<i>Thornton Wilder</i>	421 ✓
<i>COME BACK, LITTLE SHEBA</i>	<i>William Inge</i>	453
<i>THE CRUCIBLE</i>	<i>Arthur Miller</i>	482
<i>LOOK HOMEWARD, ANGEL</i>	<i>Ketti Frings</i>	534
Based on the novel by Thomas Wolfe		
<i>BIBLIOGRAPHY</i>		573

CONTEMPORARY DRAMA
FIFTEEN PLAYS

HEDDA GABLER*

By

HENRIK IBSEN

Translated by EDMUND GOSSE and WILLIAM ARCHER

IBSEN WROTE OF "HEDDA GABLER": "MY intention in giving it this name was to indicate that Hedda, as a personality, is to be regarded rather as her father's daughter than as her husband's wife. It was not my desire to deal in this play with so-called problems. What I principally wanted to do was to depict human beings, human emotions, and human destinies, upon a groundwork of certain of the social conditions and principles of the present day."

The strange qualities of the Ibsen mind and soul emerge amusingly and pathetically in the encounter that gave rise to *Hedda Gabler* and *The Master Builder*. In the autumn of 1889 Ibsen met Emilie Bardach, a miss of eighteen. He was sixty, married, a parent, and famous; she was pretty, gay, and a head-hunter. She came from Austria to meet and captivate him, and by smiling at him from a park bench as he passed on his walks, she aroused his timid interest. Thereafter they had long talks, always in public places, for Ibsen was careful. Yet he was impressed; one can imagine that short stiff figure, with the aureole of white fringe about the face and the spectacles glittering in the light, turned attentively toward the slight vivacious girl, chattering and posing for him—in the lobby of a hotel. She seems to have thought herself a "new" woman, an "Ibsen woman," in fact; and he must have been both fascinated and repelled at this embodiment of his influence. Here, in a way, was posterity, the judge to which every artist appeals, and it was already impregnated with what it thought were his ideas. Here he found the courage in action that he himself had always lacked and wished for, but it was directed and reinforced by a flippant ruthlessness. Emilie professed to wish never to marry; she would capture other women's husbands. Yet she strangely invited boredom: she was clever, she had talent for music and painting, but she would do nothing

with them. She preferred to pose as mysterious, tired, aloof. Ibsen once wrote to her, sadly, "You and the Christmas season do not quite fit together."

But she fired his imagination. Since *The Wild Duck* the use of the symbol as substitute for actuality had been a growing habit with him. He had always used life itself as his material, but in his shyness and seclusion he had tended to take it second or third hand, and compensate for lack of closely observed outline by lending depth and shadow. Emilie Bardach, so closely listened to and studied, gave him actuality first hand. At least, she gave him a character, or rather many characters, for it may be guessed that she was the prototype not only of Hedda, but also of Hilda Wangel and even of Kaia Fosli. With his hard mind and stern artistic eye, he lifted from the living girl those qualities she had displayed in their variety to charm him, and poured each into its appropriate mold. She gave him no incident, to be sure; at eighteen, what incident could there be? But fortunately he heard, at about the same time, of a brilliant but dissipated young professor who lost a manuscript; of the wife of a composer who in jealousy burned her husband's just completed symphony; and of another wife who tempted her husband, cured of alcoholism, by leaving brandy in his room. Then came the fusion, and *Hedda Gabler*. As soon as he began work on the play, early in 1890, Ibsen forbade Emilie to write to him or see him. But he remembered her, and sent her a copy of *Hedda Gabler* as a Christmas gift.

Hedda Gabler was the last of the plays in which Ibsen's mind moved outward, upon "the social conditions and principles of the present day." Thereafter he was to write four more plays, but each of them seems to move inward, to explore the geography and climate of a soul rather than of a society. And they are great plays, plays such as only a master could write, but they are not plays which would have brought an Emilie Bardach

* Used by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

from Vienna. For the inventor of the "Ibsen woman" and the "founder of modern drama" made his impact upon society and the theatre through plays which seemed to advocate a new morality, or at least a firmer one, such plays as *Pillars of Society* (1877), *A Doll's House* (1879), *Ghosts* (1881), and *An Enemy of the People* (1882). This new morality seemed liberating, based on clear insights, especially to the young of the 1880's and 1890's, and it was presented in masterly concreteness and impressive dramaturgy, in settings all could recognize, by people like those one could meet on the street. Here was truth, new truth, and Emilie Bardach was far from alone in embracing it. It demanded candor, acceptance and confession of defect or wickedness, brave confidence in the self and its judgments, vigorous espousal of causes seen to be socially desirable, defiance of mere convention. Many a bright-faced liberal has professed this code since Ibsen, and a few, of course, before him, but none more persuasively than he in the "social" plays which made his world reputation.

But he himself was not persuaded. In *The Wild Duck* (1884) the code was questioned,

and in a fashion deeply moving; again, with more poetry, perhaps, in *Rosmersholm* (1886); in *The Lady from the Sea* (1888) it scarcely seems to enter—the play's conflict cannot be resolved by any code. But Hedda Gabler professes the code, at least by implication, and she is not liberated but destroyed, and destroys others.

Perhaps Ibsen left us only with the doctrine: "The Golden Rule is that there is no Golden Rule." But the mind and spirit rebel at regarding such a blank as the product of Ibsen's life and labor. Here is one of the half-dozen of the world's greatest dramatists; he may not have given us one single message, but many; his work may picture a life lived into art which changes as the life changes, as all lives change. Unity lies not in the said but in the saying.

In this saying is Ibsenism. Modern drama, as a historical development, is surely partly created by Ibsenism. And Ibsenism is not so much a system as an attitude: thoughtfulness, seriousness, and especially searching characterization. All these and high art are to be found in *Hedda Gabler*.

HENRIK IBSEN

Born 1828, Skien, Norway.

1843–1850, Apprenticed to an apothecary in Grimstad.

1850–1851, Attended the University of Christiania (Oslo).

1851–1856, "Theatre-poet" at Bergen. For a few months before assuming this post, he traveled in Denmark and Germany studying theatrical production.

1857–1862, Manager and artistic advisor of theatres in Christiania.

1858, Married. One son.

1864, Began self-imposed exile in resentment at hostile criticism, failure of his theatre, and the state's refusal of an adequate pension. Angered by Norwegian indifference to the Prusso-Danish War, he decided not to return. Lived in Italy and Germany.

1891, Returned to Norway.

1899, Apoplexy. Unable to work thereafter.

Died 1906.

PLAYS

1850 *Catiline*. 1850 *The Viking's Barrow*. 1853 *St. John's Night*. 1855 *Lady Inger of Ostrat*. 1856 *The Feast of Solhaug*. 1857 *Olaf Liljekrans*. 1858 *Vikings of Helgeland*. 1862 *Love's Comedy*. 1864 *The Pretenders*. 1866 *Brand*. 1867 *Peer Gynt*. 1869 *The League of Youth*. 1873 *Emperor and Galilean*. 1877 *Pillars of Society*. 1879 *A Doll's*

House. 1881 *Ghosts*. 1882 *An Enemy of the People*. 1884 *The Wild Duck*. 1886 *Rosmersholm*. 1888 *The Lady from the Sea*. 1890 *Hedda Gabler*. 1892 *The Master Builder*. 1894 *Little Eyolf*. 1896 *John Gabriel Borkman*. 1899 *When We Dead Awaken*.

WRITINGS ON DRAMA

See *From Ibsen's Workshop*, 1912.

HEDDA GABLER

Characters

GEORGE TESMAN.¹

HEDDA TESMAN, *his wife.*

MISS JULIANA TESMAN, *his aunt.*

MRS. ELVSTED.

JUDGE² BRACK.

EILERT LÖVBORG.

BERTA, *servant at the Tesmans.*

The scene of the action is Tesman's villa, in the west end of Christiania.

ACT FIRST

A spacious, handsome, and tastefully furnished drawing-room, decorated in dark colors. In the back, a wide doorway with curtains drawn back, leading into a smaller room decorated in the same style as the drawing-room. In the right-hand wall of the front room, a folding door leading out to the hall. In the opposite wall, on the left, a glass door, also with curtains drawn back. Through the panes can be seen part of a veranda outside, and trees covered with autumn foliage. An oval table, with a cover on it, and surrounded by chairs, stands well forward. In front, by the wall on the right, a wide stove of dark porcelain, a high-backed arm-chair, a cushioned foot-rest, and two footstools. A settee, with a small round table in front of it, fills the upper right-hand corner. In front, on the left, a little way from the wall, a sofa. Further back than the glass door, a piano. On either side of the doorway at the back a whatnot with terra-cotta and majolica ornaments.—Against the back wall of the inner room a sofa, with a table, and one or two chairs. Over the sofa hangs a portrait of a handsome elderly man in a General's uniform. Over the table a hanging lamp, with an opal glass shade.—A number of bouquets are arranged about the drawing-room, in vases and glasses. Others lie upon the tables. The floors in both rooms are covered with thick carpets.—Morning light. The sun shines in through the glass door. [MISS JULIANA TESMAN, with her bon-

net on and carrying a parasol, comes in from the hall, followed by BERTA, who carries a bouquet wrapped in paper. MISS TESMAN is a comely and pleasant-looking lady of about sixty-five. She is nicely but simply dressed in a gray walking-costume. BERTA is a middle-aged woman of plain and rather countrified appearance.]

Miss Tesman. [Stops close to the door, listens, and says softly.] Upon my word, I don't believe they are stirring yet!

Berta. [Also softly.] I told you so, Miss. Remember how late the steamboat got in last night. And then, when they got home!—good Lord, what a lot the young mistress had to unpack before she could get to bed.

Miss Tesman. Well, well—let them have their sleep out. But let us see that they get a good breath of the fresh morning air when they do appear.

[She goes to the glass door and throws it open.]

Berta. [Beside the table, at a loss what to do with the bouquet in her hand.] I declare there isn't a bit of room left. I think I'll put it down there, Miss.

[She places it on the piano.]

Miss Tesman. So you've got a new mistress now, my dear Berta. Heaven knows it was a wrench to me to part with you.

Berta. [On the point of weeping.] And do you think it wasn't hard for me too, Miss? After all the blessed years I've been with you and Miss Rina.¹

Miss Tesman. We must make the best of it, Berta. There was nothing else to be done.

¹ Tesman, whose Christian name in the original is "Jörgen," is described as "stipendiat i kulturhistorie"—that is to say, the holder of a scholarship for purposes of research into the History of Civilization.

² In the original "Assessor."

¹ Pronounce *Reena* (All notes to *Hedda Gabler* are by the translators).

George can't do without you, you see—he absolutely can't. He has had you to look after him ever since he was a little boy.

Berta. Ah, but, Miss Julia, I can't help thinking of Miss Rina lying helpless at home there, poor thing. And with only that new girl too! She'll never learn to take proper care of an invalid.

Miss Tesman. Oh, I shall manage to train her. And of course, you know, I shall take most of it upon myself. You needn't be uneasy about my poor sister, my dear Berta.

Berta. Well, but there's another thing, Miss. I'm so mortally afraid I shan't be able to suit the young mistress.

Miss Tesman. Oh, well—just at first there may be one or two things—

Berta. Most like she'll be terrible grand in her ways.

Miss Tesman. Well, you can't wonder at that—General Gabler's daughter! Think of the sort of life she was accustomed to in her father's time. Don't you remember how we used to see her riding down the road along with the General? In that long black habit—and with feathers in her hat?

Berta. Yes, indeed—I remember well enough!—But, good Lord, I should never have dreamt in those days that she and Master George would make a match of it.

Miss Tesman. Nor I.—But by-the-bye, Berta—while I think of it: in future you mustn't say Master George. You must say Dr. Tesman.

Berta. Yes, the young mistress spoke of that too—last night—the moment they set foot in the house. Is it true then, Miss?

Miss Tesman. Yes, indeed it is. Only think, Berta—some foreign university has made him a doctor—while he has been abroad, you understand. I hadn't heard a word about it, until he told me himself upon the pier.

Berta. Well, well he's clever enough for anything, he is. But I didn't think he'd have gone in for doctoring people, too.

Miss Tesman. No, no, it's not that sort of doctor he is. [*Nods significantly.*] But let me tell you, we may have to call him something still grander before long.

Berta. You don't say so! What can that be, Miss?

Miss Tesman. [*Smiling.*] H'm—wouldn't you like to know! [*With emotion.*] Ah, dear, dear—if my poor brother could only look up from his grave now, and see what his little boy has grown into! [*Looks around.*] But bless me, Berta—why have you done this? Taken the chintz covers off all the furniture?

Berta. The mistress told me to. She can't abide covers on the chairs, she says.

Miss Tesman. Are they going to make this their everyday sitting-room then?

Berta. Yes, that's what I understood—from the mistress. Master George—the doctor—he said nothing.

[*GEORGE TESMAN comes from the right into the inner room, humming to himself, and carrying an unstrapped empty port-manteau. He is a middle-sized, young-looking man of thirty-three, rather stout, with a round, open, cheerful face, fair hair and beard. He wears spectacles, and is somewhat carelessly dressed in comfortable indoor clothes.*]

Miss Tesman. Good morning, good morning, George.

Tesman. [*In the doorway between the rooms.*] Aunt Julia! Dear Aunt Julia! [*Goes up to her and shakes hands warmly.*] Come all this way—so early! Eh?

Miss Tesman. Why, of course I had to come and see how you were getting on.

Tesman. In spite of your having had no proper night's rest?

Miss Tesman. Oh, that makes no difference to me.

Tesman. Well, I suppose you got home all right from the pier? Eh?

Miss Tesman. Yes, quite safely, thank goodness. Judge Brack was good enough to see me right to my door.

Tesman. We were so sorry we couldn't give you a seat in the carriage. But you saw what a pile of boxes Hedda had to bring with her.

Miss Tesman. Yes, she had certainly plenty of boxes.

Berta. [*To TESMAN.*] Shall I go in and see if there's anything I can do for the mistress?

Tesman. No, thank you, Berta—you needn't. She said she would ring if she wanted anything.

Berta. [*Going towards the right.*] Very well.

Tesman. But look here—take this port-manteau with you.

Berta. [*Taking it.*] I'll put it in the attic. [*She goes out by the hall door.*]

Tesman. Fancy, Auntie—I had the whole of that portmanteau chock full of copies of documents. You wouldn't believe how much I have picked up from all the archives I have been examining—curious old details that no one has had any idea of—

Miss Tesman. Yes, you don't seem to have wasted your time on your wedding trip, George.

Tesman. No, that I haven't. But do take

off your bonnet, Auntie. Look here! Let me untie the strings—eh?

Miss Tesman. [*While he does so.*] Well, well—this is just as if you were still at home with us.

Tesman. [*With the bonnet in his hand, looks at it from all sides.*] Why, what a gorgeous bonnet you've been investing in!

Miss Tesman. I bought it on Hedda's account.

Tesman. On Hedda's account? Eh?

Miss Tesman. Yes, so that Hedda needn't be ashamed of me if we happened to go out together.

Tesman. [*Patting her cheek.*] You always think of everything, Aunt Julia. [*Lays the bonnet on a chair beside the table.*] And now, look here—suppose we sit comfortably on the sofa and have a little chat, till Hedda comes.

[*They seat themselves. She places her parasol in the corner of the sofa.*]

Miss Tesman. [*Takes both his hands and looks at him.*] What a delight it is to have you again, as large as life, before my very eyes, George! My George—my poor brother's own boy!

Tesman. And it's a delight for me, too, to see you again, Aunt Julia! You, who have been father and mother in one to me.

Miss Tesman. Oh yes, I know you will always keep a place in your heart for your old aunts.

Tesman. And what about Aunt Rina? No improvement—eh?

Miss Tesman. Oh no—we can scarcely look for any improvement in her case, poor thing. There she lies, helpless, as she has lain for all these years. But heaven grant I may not lose her yet a while! For if I did, I don't know what I should make of my life, George—especially now that I haven't you to look after any more.

Tesman. [*Patting her back.*] There, there, there—!

Miss Tesman. [*Suddenly changing her tone.*] And to think that here are you a married man, George!—And that you should be the one to carry off Hedda Gabler—the beautiful Hedda Gabler! Only think of it—she, that was so beset with admirers!

Tesman. [*Hums a little and smiles complacently.*] Yes, I fancy I have several good friends about town who would like to stand in my shoes—eh?

Miss Tesman. And then this fine long wedding-tour you have had! More than five—nearly six months—

Tesman. Well, for me it has been a sort of tour of research as well. I have had to do

much grubbing among old records—and to read no end of books too, Auntie.

Miss Tesman. Oh yes, I suppose so. [*More confidentially, and lowering her voice a little.*] But listen now, George—have you nothing—nothing special to tell me?

Tesman. As to our journey?

Miss Tesman. Yes.

Tesman. No, I don't know of anything except what I have told you in my letters. I had a doctor's degree conferred on me—but that I told you yesterday.

Miss Tesman. Yes, yes, you did. But what I mean is—haven't you any—any—expectations—?

Tesman. Expectations?

Miss Tesman. Why, you know, George—I'm your old auntie!

Tesman. Why, of course I have expectations.

Miss Tesman. Ah!

Tesman. I have every expectation of being a professor one of these days.

Miss Tesman. Oh yes, a professor—

Tesman. Indeed, I may say I am certain of it. But my dear Auntie—you know all about that already!

Miss Tesman. [*Laughing to herself.*] Yes, of course I do. You are quite right there. [*Changing the subject.*] But we were talking about your journey. It must have cost a great deal of money, George?

Tesman. Well, you see—my handsome traveling-scholarship went a good way.

Miss Tesman. But I can't understand how you can have made it go far enough for two.

Tesman. No, that's not so easy to understand—eh?

Miss Tesman. And especially traveling with a lady—they tell me that makes it ever so much more expensive.

Tesman. Yes, of course—it makes it a little more expensive. But Hedda had to have this trip, Auntie. She really had to. Nothing else would have done.

Miss Tesman. No, no, I suppose not. A wedding-tour seems to be quite indispensable nowadays.—But tell me now—have you gone thoroughly over the house yet?

Tesman. Yes, you may be sure I have. I have been afoot ever since daylight.

Miss Tesman. And what do you think of it all?

Tesman. I'm delighted! Quite delighted! Only I can't think what we are to do with the two empty rooms between this inner parlor and Hedda's bedroom.

Miss Tesman. [*Laughing.*] Oh, my dear George, I daresay you may find some use for them—in the course of time.

Tesman. Why of course, you are quite right, Aunt Julia! You mean as my library increases—eh?

Miss Tesman. Yes, quite so, my dear boy. It was your library I was thinking of.

Tesman. I am especially pleased on Hedda's account. Often and often, before we were engaged, she said that she would never care to live anywhere but in Secretary Falk's villa.¹

Miss Tesman. Yes, it was lucky that this very house should come into the market, just after you had started.

Tesman. Yes, Aunt Julia, the luck was on our side, wasn't it—eh?

Miss Tesman. But the expense, my dear George! You will find it very expensive, all this.

Tesman. [*Looks at her, a little cast down.*] Yes, I suppose I shall, Aunt!

Miss Tesman. Oh, frightfully!

Tesman. How much do you think? In round numbers?—Eh?

Miss Tesman. Oh, I can't even guess until all the accounts come in.

Tesman. Well, fortunately, Judge Brack has secured the most favorable terms for me—so he said in a letter to Hedda.

Miss Tesman. Yes, don't be uneasy, my dear boy.—Besides, I have given security for the furniture and all the carpets.

Tesman. Security? You? My dear Aunt Julia—what sort of security could you give?

Miss Tesman. I have given a mortgage on our annuity.

Tesman. [*Jumps up.*] What! On your—and Aunt Rina's annuity!

Miss Tesman. Yes, I knew of no other plan, you see.

Tesman. [*Placing himself before her.*] Have you gone out of your senses, Auntie? Your annuity—it's all that you and Aunt Rina have to live upon.

Miss Tesman. Well, well—don't get so excited about it. It's only a matter of form, you know—Judge Brack assured me of that. It was he that was kind enough to arrange the whole affair for me. A mere matter of form, he said.

Tesman. Yes, that may be all very well. But nevertheless—

Miss Tesman. You will have your own salary to depend upon now. And, good heavens, even if we did have to pay up a little—! To eke things out a bit at the start—! Why, it would be nothing but a pleasure to us.

Tesman. Oh Auntie—will you never be tired of making sacrifices for me!

Miss Tesman. [*Rises and lays her hand on his shoulder.*] Have I any other happiness in this world except to smooth your way for you, my dear boy? You, who have had neither father nor mother to depend on. And now we have reached the goal, George! Things have looked black enough for us, sometimes; but, thank heaven, now you have nothing to fear.

Tesman. Yes, it is really marvelous how everything has turned out for the best.

Miss Tesman. And the people who opposed you—who wanted to bar the way for you—now you have them at your feet. They have fallen, George. Your most dangerous rival—his fall was the worst.—And now he has to lie on the bed he has made for himself—poor misguided creature.

Tesman. Have you heard anything of Eilert? Since I went away, I mean.

Miss Tesman. Only that he is said to have published a new book.

Tesman. What! Eilert Lövborg! Recently—eh?

Miss Tesman. Yes, so they say. Heaven knows whether it can be worth anything! Ah, when your new book appears—that will be another story, George! What is it to be about?

Tesman. It will deal with the domestic industries of Brabant during the Middle Ages.

Miss Tesman. Fancy—to be able to write on such a subject as that!

Tesman. However, it may be some time before the book is ready. I have all these collections to arrange first, you see.

Miss Tesman. Yes, collecting and arranging—no one can beat you at that. There you are my poor brother's own son.

Tesman. I am looking forward eagerly to setting to work at it; especially now that I have my own delightful home to work in.

Miss Tesman. And, most of all, now that you have got the wife of your heart, my dear George.

Tesman. [*Embracing her.*] Oh yes, yes, Aunt Julia! Hedda—she is the best part of it all! [*Looks toward the doorway.*] I believe I hear her coming—eh?

[*HEDDA enters from the left through the inner room. She is a woman of nine-and-twenty. Her face and figure show refinement and distinction. Her complexion is pale and opaque. Her steel-gray eyes express a cold, unruffled repose. Her hair is of an agreeable medium*

¹ In the original, "Statsrådde Falks villa"—showing that it had belonged to the widow of a cabinet minister.

brown, but not particularly abundant. She is dressed in a tasteful, somewhat loose-fitting morning gown.

Miss Tesman. [Going to meet HEDDA.] Good morning, my dear Hedda! Good morning, and a hearty welcome.

Hedda. [Holds out her hand.] Good morning, dear Miss Tesman! So early a call! That is kind of you.

Miss Tesman. [With some embarrassment.] Well—has the bride slept well in her new home?

Hedda. Oh yes, thanks. Passably.

Tesman. [Laughing.] Passably! Come, that's good, Hedda! You were sleeping like a stone when I got up.

Hedda. Fortunately. Of course one has always to accustom one's self to new surroundings, Miss Tesman—little by little. [Looking toward the left.] Oh—there the servant has gone and opened the veranda door, and let in a whole flood of sunshine.

Miss Tesman. [Going toward the door.] Well, then we will shut it.

Hedda. No, no, not that! Tesman, please draw the curtains. That will give a softer light.

Tesman. [At the door.] All right—all right.—There now, Hedda, now you have both shade and fresh air.

Hedda. Yes, fresh air we certainly must have, with all these stacks of flowers—. But—won't you sit down, Miss Tesman?

Miss Tesman. No, thank you. Now that I have seen that everything is all right here—thank heaven!—I must be getting home again. My sister is lying longing for me, poor thing.

Tesman. Give her my very best love, Auntie; and say I shall look in and see her later in the day.

Miss Tesman. Yes, yes, I'll be sure to tell her. But by-the-bye, George— [Feeling in her dress pocket.]—I had almost forgotten—I have something for you here.

Tesman. What is it, Auntie? Eh?

Miss Tesman. [Produces a flat parcel wrapped in newspaper and hands it to him.] Look here, my dear boy.

Tesman. [Opening the parcel.] Well, I declare!—Have you really saved them for me, Aunt Julia! Hedda! isn't this touching—eh?

Hedda. [Beside the whatnot on the right.] Well, what is it?

Tesman. My old morning-shoes! My slippers.

Hedda. Indeed. I remember you often spoke of them while we were abroad.

Tesman. Yes, I missed them terribly.

[Goes up to her.] Now you shall see them, Hedda!

Hedda. [Going toward the stove.] Thanks, I really don't care about it.

Tesman. [Following her.] Only think—ill as she was, Aunt Rina embroidered these for me. Oh, you can't think how many associations cling to them.

Hedda. [At the table.] Scarcely for me.

Miss Tesman. Of course not for Hedda, George.

Tesman. Well, but now that she belongs to the family, I thought—

Hedda. [Interrupting.] We shall never get on with this servant, Tesman.

Miss Tesman. Not get on with Berta?

Tesman. Why, dear, what puts that in your head? Eh?

Hedda. [Pointing.] Look there! She has left her old bonnet lying about on a chair.

Tesman. [In consternation, drops the slippers on the floor.] Why, Hedda—

Hedda. Just fancy, if anyone should come in and see it!

Tesman. But Hedda—that's Aunt Julia's bonnet.

Hedda. Is it!

Miss Tesman. [Taking up the bonnet.] Yes, indeed it's mine. And, what's more, it's not old, Madam Hedda.

Hedda. I really did not look closely at it, Miss Tesman.

Miss Tesman. [Tying on the bonnet.] Let me tell you it's the first time I have worn it—the very first time.

Tesman. And a very nice bonnet it is too—quite a beauty!

Miss Tesman. Oh, it's no such great thing, George. [Looks around her.] My parasol—? Ah, here. [Takes it.] For this is mine too— [Mutters.]—not Berta's.

Tesman. A new bonnet and a new parasol! Only think, Hedda!

Hedda. Very handsome indeed.

Tesman. Yes, isn't it? Eh? But Auntie, take a good look at Hedda before you go! See how handsome she is!

Miss Tesman. Oh, my dear boy, there's nothing new in that. Hedda was always lovely. [She nods and goes toward the right.]

Tesman. [Following.] Yes, but have you noticed what splendid condition she is in? How she has filled out on the journey?

Hedda. [Crossing the room.] Oh, do be quiet—!

Miss Tesman. [Who has stopped and turned.] Filled out?

Tesman. Of course you don't notice it so much now that she has that dress on. But I, who can see—

Hedda. [*At the glass door, impatiently.*] Oh, you can't see anything.

Tesman. It must be the mountain air in the Tyrol—

Hedda. [*Curtly, interrupting.*] I am exactly as I was when I started.

Tesman. So you insist; but I'm quite certain you are not. Don't you agree with me, Auntie?

Miss Tesman. [*Who has been gazing at her with folded hands.*] Hedda is lovely—lovely—lovely. [*Goes up to her, takes her head between both hands, draws it downward, and kisses her hair.*] God bless and preserve Hedda Tesman—for George's sake.

Hedda. [*Gently freeing herself.*] Oh—! Let me go.

Miss Tesman. [*In quiet emotion.*] I shall not let a day pass without coming to see you.

Tesman. No, you won't, will you, Auntie? Eh?

Miss Tesman. Good-by—good-by!

[*She goes out by the hall door. TESMAN accompanies her. The door remains half open. TESMAN can be heard repeating his message to Aunt Rina and his thanks for the slippers.*

In the meantime, HEDDA walks about the room, raising her arms and clenching her hands as if in desperation. Then she flings back the curtains from the glass door, and stands there looking out.

Presently TESMAN returns and closes the door behind him.

Tesman. [*Picks up the slippers from the floor.*] What are you looking at, Hedda?

Hedda. [*Once more calm and mistress of herself.*] I am only looking at the leaves. They are so yellow—so withered.

Tesman. [*Wraps up the slippers and lays them on the table.*] Well, you see, we are well into September now.

Hedda. [*Again restless.*] Yes, to think of it!—Already in—September.

Tesman. Don't you think Aunt Julia's manner was strange, dear? Almost solemn? Can you imagine what was the matter with her? Eh?

Hedda. I scarcely know her, you see. Is she not often like that?

Tesman. No, not as she was today.

Hedda. [*Leaving the glass door.*] Do you think she was annoyed about the bonnet?

Tesman. Oh, scarcely at all. Perhaps a little, just at the moment—

Hedda. But what an idea, to pitch her bonnet about in the drawing-room! No one does that sort of thing.

Tesman. Well, you may be sure Aunt Julia won't do it again.

Hedda. In any case, I shall manage to make my peace with her.

Tesman. Yes, my dear, good Hedda, if you only would.

Hedda. When you call this afternoon, you might invite her to spend the evening here.

Tesman. Yes, that I will. And there's one thing more you could do that would delight her heart.

Hedda. What is it?

Tesman. If you could only prevail on yourself to say *du*¹ to her. For my sake, Hedda? Eh?

Hedda. No, no, Tesman—you really mustn't ask that of me. I have told you so already. I shall try to call her "Aunt"; and you must be satisfied with that.

Tesman. Well, well. Only I think now that you belong to the family, you—

Hedda. H'm—I can't in the least see why—

[*She goes up toward the middle doorway.*

Tesman. [*After a pause.*] Is there anything the matter with you, Hedda? Eh?

Hedda. I'm only looking at my old piano. It doesn't go at all well with all the other things.

Tesman. The first time I draw my salary, we'll see about exchanging it.

Hedda. No, no—no exchanging. I don't want to part with it. Suppose we put it there in the inner room, and then get another here in its place. When it's convenient, I mean.

Tesman. [*A little taken aback.*] Yes—of course we could do that.

Hedda. [*Takes up the bouquet from the piano.*] These flowers were not here last night when we arrived.

Tesman. Aunt Julia must have brought them for you.

Hedda. [*Examining the bouquet.*] A visiting-card. [*Takes it out and reads.*] "Shall return later in the day." Can you guess whose card it is?

Tesman. No. Whose? Eh?

Hedda. The name is "Mrs. Elvsted."

Tesman. Is it really? Sheriff Elvsted's wife? Miss Rysing that was.

Hedda. Exactly. The girl with the irritating hair, that she was always showing off. An old flame of yours, I've been told.

Tesman. [*Laughing.*] Oh, that didn't last long; and it was before I knew you, Hedda. But fancy her being in town!

Hedda. It's odd that she should call upon us. I have scarcely seen her since we left school.

¹ *Du* = thou; Tesman means, "If you could persuade yourself to *tutoyer* her."

Tesman. I haven't seen her either for—heaven knows how long. I wonder how she can endure to live in such an out-of-the-way hole—eh?

Hedda. [After a moment's thought, says suddenly.] Tell me, *Tesman*—isn't it somewhere near there that he—that—*Eilert Lövborg* is living?

Tesman. Yes, he is somewhere in that part of the country.

[*BERTA enters by the hall door.*]

Berta. That lady, ma'am, that brought some flowers a little while ago, is here again. [Pointing.] The flowers you have in your hand, ma'am.

Hedda. Ah, is she? Well, please show her in.

[*BERTA opens the door for MRS. ELVSTED, and goes out herself.*—*MRS. ELVSTED is a woman of fragile figure, with pretty, soft features. Her eyes are light blue, large, round, and somewhat prominent, with a startled, inquiring expression. Her hair is remarkably light, almost flaxen, and unusually abundant and wavy. She is a couple of years younger than HEDDA. She wears a dark visiting dress, tasteful, but not quite in the latest fashion.*]

Hedda. [Receives her warmly.] How do you do, my dear *Mrs. Elvsted*? It's delightful to see you again.

Mrs. Elvsted. [Nervously, struggling for self-control.] Yes, it's a very long time since we met.

Tesman. [Gives her his hand.] And we too—eh?

Hedda. Thanks for your lovely flowers—

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh, not at all—. I would have come straight here yesterday afternoon; but I heard that you were away—

Tesman. Have you just come to town? Eh?

Mrs. Elvsted. I arrived yesterday, about midday. Oh, I was quite in despair when I heard that you were not at home.

Hedda. In despair? How so?

Tesman. Why, my dear *Mrs. Rysing*—I mean *Mrs. Elvsted*—

Hedda. I hope that you are not in any trouble?

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, I am. And I don't know another living creature here that I can turn to.

Hedda. [Laying the bouquet on the table.] Come—let us sit here on the sofa—

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh, I am too restless to sit down.

Hedda. Oh no, you're not. Come here.

[She draws *MRS. ELVSTED* down upon the sofa and sits at her side.]

Tesman. Well? What is it, *Mrs. Elvsted*—?

Hedda. Has anything particular happened to you at home?

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes—and no. Oh—I am so anxious you should not misunderstand me—

Hedda. Then your best plan is to tell us the whole story, *Mrs. Elvsted*.

Tesman. I suppose that's what you have come for—eh?

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, yes—of course it is. Well then, I must tell you—if you don't already know—that *Eilert Lövborg* is in town, too.

Hedda. *Lövborg*—!

Tesman. What! Has *Eilert Lövborg* come back? Fancy that, *Hedda*!

Hedda. Well, well—I hear it.

Mrs. Elvsted. He has been here a week already. Just fancy—a whole week! In this terrible town, alone! With so many temptations on all sides.

Hedda. But, my dear *Mrs. Elvsted*—how does he concern you so much?

Mrs. Elvsted. [Looks at her with a startled air, and says rapidly.] He was the children's tutor.

Hedda. Your children's?

Mrs. Elvsted. My husband's. I have none.

Hedda. Your step-children's, then?

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes.

Tesman. [Somewhat hesitatingly.] Then was he—I don't know how to express it—was he—regular enough in his habits to be fit for the post? Eh?

Mrs. Elvsted. For the last two years his conduct has been irreproachable.

Tesman. Has it indeed? Fancy that, *Hedda*!

Hedda. I hear it.

Mrs. Elvsted. Perfectly irreproachable, I assure you! In every respect. But all the same—now that I know he is here—in this great town—and with a large sum of money in his hands—I can't help being in mortal fear for him.

Tesman. Why did he not remain where he was? With you and your husband? Eh?

Mrs. Elvsted. After his book was published he was too restless and unsettled to remain with us.

Tesman. Yes, by-the-bye, Aunt *Julia* told me he had published a new book.

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, a big book, dealing with the march of civilization—in broad outline, as it were. It came out about a fortnight ago. And since it has sold so well, and

been so much read—and made such a sensation—

Tesman. Has it indeed? It must be something he has had lying by since his better days.

Mrs. Elvsted. Long ago, you mean?

Tesman. Yes.

Mrs. Elvsted. No, he has written it all since he has been with us—within the last year.

Tesman. Isn't that good news, Hedda? Think of that!

Mrs. Elvsted. Ah yes, if only it would last!

Hedda. Have you seen him here in town?

Mrs. Elvsted. No, not yet. I have had the greatest difficulty in finding out his address. But this morning I discovered it at last.

Hedda. [*Looks searchingly at her.*] Do you know, it seems to me a little odd of your husband—h'm—

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Starting nervously.*] Of my husband! What!

Hedda. That he should send you to town on such an errand—that he does not come himself and look after his friend.

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh no, no—my husband has no time. And besides, I—I had some shopping to do.

Hedda. [*With a slight smile.*] Ah, that is a different matter.

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Rising quickly and uneasily.*] And now I beg and implore you, Mr. Tesman—receive Eilert Lövborg kindly if he comes to you! And that he is sure to do. You see you were such great friends in the old days. And then you are interested in the same studies—the same branch of science—so far as I can understand.

Tesman. We used to be, at any rate.

Mrs. Elvsted. That is why I beg so earnestly that you—you too—will keep a sharp eye upon him. Oh, you will promise me that, Mr. Tesman—won't you?

Tesman. With the greatest of pleasure, Mrs. Rysing—

Hedda. Elvsted.

Tesman. I assure you I shall do all I possibly can for Eilert. You may rely upon me.

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh, how very, very kind of you! [*Presses his hands.*] Thanks, thanks, thanks! [*Frightened.*] You see, my husband is so very fond of him!

Hedda. [*Rising.*] You ought to write to him, Tesman. Perhaps he may not care to come to you of his own accord.

Tesman. Well, perhaps it would be the right thing to do, Hedda? Eh?

Hedda. And the sooner the better. Why not at once?

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Imploringly.*] Oh, if you only would!

Tesman. I'll write this moment. Have you his address, Mrs.—Mrs. Elvsted?

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes. [*Takes a slip of paper from her pocket and hands it to him.*] Here it is.

Tesman. Good, good. Then I'll go in— [*Looks about him.*] By-the-bye—my slippers? Oh, here.

[*Takes the packet, and is about to go.*]

Hedda. Be sure you write him a cordial, friendly letter. And a good long one, too.

Tesman. Yes, I will.

Mrs. Elvsted. But please, please don't say a word to show that I have suggested it.

Tesman. No, how could you think I would? Eh?

[*He goes out to the right, through the inner room.*]

Hedda. [*Goes up to MRS. ELVSTED, smiles, and says in a low voice.*] There! We have killed two birds with one stone.

Mrs. Elvsted. What do you mean?

Hedda. Could you not see that I wanted him to go?

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, to write the letter—

Hedda. And that I might speak to you alone.

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Confused.*] About the same thing?

Hedda. Precisely.

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Apprehensively.*] But there is nothing more, Mrs. Tesman! Absolutely nothing!

Hedda. Oh yes, but there is. There is a great deal more—I can see that. Sit here—and we'll have a cozy, confidential chat.

[*She forces MRS. ELVSTED to sit in the easy-chair beside the stove, and seats herself on one of the footstools.*]

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Anxiously, looking at her watch.*] But, my dear Mrs. Tesman—I was really on the point of going.

Hedda. Oh, you can't be in such a hurry. —Well? Now tell me something about your life at home.

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh, that is just what I care least to speak about.

Hedda. But to me, dear—? Why, weren't we schoolfellows?

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, but you were in the class above me. Oh, how dreadfully afraid of you I was then!

Hedda. Afraid of me?

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, dreadfully. For when we met on the stairs you used always to pull my hair.

Hedda. Did I, really?

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, and once you said you would burn it off my head.

Hedda. Oh, that was all nonsense, of course.

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, but I was so silly in those days.—And since then, too—we have drifted so far—far apart from each other. Our circles have been so entirely different.

Hedda. Well then, we must try to drift together again. Now listen! At school we said *du* to each other; and we called each other by our Christian names—

Mrs. Elvsted. No, I am sure you must be mistaken.

Hedda. No, not at all! I can remember quite distinctly. So now we are going to renew our old friendship. [*Draws the footstool close to Mrs. ELVSTED.*] There now! [*Kisses her cheek.*] You must say *du* to me and call me Hedda.

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Presses and pats her hands.*] Oh, how good and kind you are! I am not used to such kindness.

Hedda. There, there, there! And I shall say *du* to you, as in the old days, and call you my dear Thora.

Mrs. Elvsted. My name is Thea.¹

Hedda. Why, of course! I meant Thea. [*Looks at her compassionately.*] So you are not accustomed to goodness and kindness, Thea? Not in your own home?

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh, if I only had a home! But I haven't any; I have never had a home.

Hedda. [*Looks at her for a moment.*] I almost suspected as much.

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Gazing helplessly before her.*] Yes—yes—yes.

Hedda. I don't quite remember—was it not as housekeeper that you first went to Mr. Elvsted's?

Mrs. Elvsted. I really went as governess. But his wife—his late wife—was an invalid—and rarely left her room. So I had to look after the housekeeping as well.

Hedda. And then—at last—you became mistress of the house.

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Sadly.*] Yes, I did.

Hedda. Let me see—about how long ago was that?

Mrs. Elvsted. My marriage?

Hedda. Yes.

Mrs. Elvsted. Five years ago.

Hedda. To be sure; it must be that.

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh, those five years—! Or at all events the last two or three of them! Oh, if you² could only imagine—

Hedda. [*Giving her a little slap on the hand.*] *De?* Fie, Thea!

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, yes, I will try—Well, if—you could only imagine and understand—

Hedda. [*Lightly.*] Eilert Lövborg has been in your neighborhood about three years, hasn't he?

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Looks at her doubtfully.*] Eilert Lövborg? Yes—he has.

Hedda. Had you known him before, in town here?

Mrs. Elvsted. Scarcely at all. I mean—I knew him by name, of course.

Hedda. But you saw a good deal of him in the country?

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, he came to us every day. You see, he gave the children lessons; for in the long run I couldn't manage it all myself.

Hedda. No, that's clear.—And your husband—? I suppose he is often away from home?

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes. Being sheriff, you know, he has to travel about a good deal in his district.

Hedda. [*Leaning against the arm of the chair.*] Thea—my poor, sweet Thea—now you must tell me everything—exactly as it stands.

Mrs. Elvsted. Well then, you must question me.

Hedda. What sort of a man is your husband, Thea? I mean—you know—in everyday life. Is he kind to you?

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Evasively.*] I am sure he means well in everything.

Hedda. I should think he must be altogether too old for you. There is at least twenty years' difference between you, is there not?

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Irritably.*] Yes, that is true, too. Everything about him is repellent to me! We have not a thought in common. We have no single point of sympathy—he and I.

Hedda. But is he not fond of you all the same? In his own way?

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh, I really don't know. I think he regards me simply as a useful property. And then it doesn't cost much to keep me. I am not expensive.

Hedda. That is stupid of you.

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Shakes her head.*] It cannot be otherwise—not with him. I don't think he really cares for anyone but himself—and perhaps a little for the children.

Hedda. And for Eilert Lövborg, Thea.

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Looking at her.*] For

¹ Pronounce *Tora* and *Taya*.

² Mrs. Elvsted here uses the formal pronoun *De*, whereupon Hedda rebukes her. In her next speech Mrs. Elvsted says *du*.

Eilert Lövborg? What puts that into your head?

Hedda. Well, my dear—I should say, when he sends you after him all the way to town — [*Smiling almost imperceptibly.*] And besides, you said so yourself, to Tesman.

Mrs. Elvsted. [*With a little nervous twitch.*] Did I? Yes, I suppose I did. [*Vehemently, but not loudly.*] No—I may just as well make a clean breast of it at once! For it must all come out in any case.

Hedda. Why, my dear Thea—?

Mrs. Elvsted. Well, to make a long story short: My husband did not know that I was coming.

Hedda. What! Your husband didn't know it!

Mrs. Elvsted. No, of course not. For that matter, he was away from home himself—he was traveling. Oh, I could bear it no longer, Hedda! I couldn't, indeed—so utterly alone as I should have been in the future.

Hedda. Well? And then?

Mrs. Elvsted. So I put together some of my things—what I needed most—as quietly as possible. And then I left the house.

Hedda. Without a word?

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes—and took the train straight to town.

Hedda. Why, my dear, good Thea—to think of you daring to do it!

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Rises and moves about the room.*] What else could I possibly do?

Hedda. But what do you think your husband will say when you go home again?

Mrs. Elvsted. [*At the table, looks at her.*] Back to him?

Hedda. Of course.

Mrs. Elvsted. I shall never go back to him again.

Hedda. [*Rising and going toward her.*] Then you have left your home—for good and all?

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes. There was nothing else to be done.

Hedda. But then—to take flight so openly.

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh, it's impossible to keep things of that sort secret.

Hedda. But what do you think people will say of you, Thea?

Mrs. Elvsted. They may say what they like, for aught I care. [*Seats herself wearily and sadly on the sofa.*] I have done nothing but what I had to do.

Hedda. [*After a short silence.*] And what are your plans now? What do you think of doing?

Mrs. Elvsted. I don't know yet. I only know this, that I must live here, where Eilert Lövborg is—if I am to live at all.

Hedda. [*Takes a chair from the table, seats herself beside her, and strokes her hands.*] My dear Thea—how did this—this friendship—between you and Eilert Lövborg come about?

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh, it grew up gradually. I gained a sort of influence over him.

Hedda. Indeed?

Mrs. Elvsted. He gave up his old habits. Not because I asked him to, for I never dared do that. But of course he saw how repulsive they were to me; and so he dropped them.

Hedda. [*Concealing an involuntary smile of scorn.*] Then you have reclaimed him—as the saying goes—my little Thea.

Mrs. Elvsted. So he says himself, at any rate. And he, on his side, has made a real human being of me—taught me to think, and to understand so many things.

Hedda. Did he give you lessons too, then?

Mrs. Elvsted. No, not exactly lessons. But he talked to me—talked about such an infinity of things. And then came the lovely, happy time when I began to share in his work—when he allowed me to help him!

Hedda. Oh, he did, did he?

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes! He never wrote anything without my assistance.

Hedda. You were two good comrades, in fact?

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Eagerly.*] Comrades! Yes, fancy, Hedda—that is the very word he used! Oh, I ought to feel perfectly happy; and yet I cannot; for I don't know how long it will last.

Hedda. Are you no surer of him than that?

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Gloomily.*] A woman's shadow stands between Eilert Lövborg and me.

Hedda. [*Looks at her anxiously.*] Who can that be?

Mrs. Elvsted. I don't know. Someone he knew in his—in his past. Someone he has never been able wholly to forget.

Hedda. What has he told you—about this?

Mrs. Elvsted. He has only once—quite vaguely—alluded to it.

Hedda. Well! And what did he say?

Mrs. Elvsted. He said that when they parted, she threatened to shoot him with a pistol.

Hedda. [*With cold composure.*] Oh nonsense! No one does that sort of thing here.

Mrs. Elvsted. No. And that is why I think it must have been that red-haired singing-woman whom he once—

Hedda. Yes, very likely.

Mrs. Elvsted. For I remember they used to say of her that she carried loaded firearms.

Hedda. Oh—then of course it must have been she.

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Wringing her hands.*] And now just fancy, Hedda—I hear that this singing-woman—that she is in town again! Oh, I don't know what to do—

Hedda. [*Glancing toward the inner room.*] Hush! Here comes Tesman. [*Rises and whispers.*] Thea—all this must remain between you and me.

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Springing up.*] Oh yes—yes! For heaven's sake—!

[*GEORGE TESMAN, with a letter in his hand, comes from the right through the inner room.*]

Tesman. There now—the epistle is finished.

Hedda. That's right. And now Mrs. Elvsted is just going. Wait a moment—I'll go with you to the garden gate.

Tesman. Do you think Berta could post the letter, Hedda dear?

Hedda. [*Takes it.*] I will tell her to.

[*BERTA enters from the hall.*]

Berta. Judge Brack wishes to know if Mrs. Tesman will receive him.

Hedda. Yes, ask Judge Brack to come in. And look here—put this letter in the post.

Berta. [*Taking the letter.*] Yes, ma'am.

[*She opens the door for JUDGE BRACK and goes out herself. BRACK is a man of forty-five; thick-set, but well-built and elastic in his movements. His face is roundish with an aristocratic profile. His hair is short, still almost black, and carefully dressed. His eyes are lively and sparkling. His eyebrows thick. His moustaches are also thick, with short-cut ends. He wears a well-cut walking-suit, a little too youthful for his age. He uses an eye-glass, which he now and then lets drop.*]

Judge Brack. [*With his hat in his hand, bowing.*] May one venture to call so early in the day?

Hedda. Of course one may.

Tesman. [*Presses his hand.*] You are welcome at any time. [*Introducing him.*] Judge Brack—Miss Rysing—

Hedda. Oh—!

Brack. [*Bowing.*] Ah—delighted—

Hedda. [*Looks at him and laughs.*] It's nice to have a look at you by daylight, Judge!

Brack. Do you find me—altered?

Hedda. A little younger, I think.

Brack. Thank you so much.

Tesman. But what do you think of Hedda—eh? Doesn't she look flourishing? She has actually—

Hedda. Oh, do leave me alone. You haven't thanked Judge Brack for all the trouble he has taken—

Brack. Oh, nonsense—it was a pleasure to me—

Hedda. Yes, you are a friend indeed. But here stands Thea all impatience to be off—so *au revoir*, Judge. I shall be back again presently.

[*Mutual salutations. MRS. ELVSTED and HEDDA go out by the hall door.*]

Brack. Well—is your wife tolerably satisfied—

Tesman. Yes, we can't thank you sufficiently. Of course she talks of a little rearrangement here and there; and one or two things are still wanting. We shall have to buy some additional trifles.

Brack. Indeed!

Tesman. But we won't trouble you about these things. Hedda says she herself will look after what is wanting.—Shan't we sit down? Eh?

Brack. Thanks, for a moment. [*Seats himself beside the table.*] There is something I wanted to speak to you about, my dear Tesman.

Tesman. Indeed? Ah, I understand! [*Seating himself.*] I suppose it's the serious part of the frolic that is coming now. Eh?

Brack. Oh, the money question is not so very pressing; though, for that matter, I wish we had gone a little more economically to work.

Tesman. But that would never have done, you know! Think of Hedda, my dear fellow! You, who know her so well—. I couldn't possibly ask her to put up with a shabby style of living!

Brack. No, no—that is just the difficulty.

Tesman. And then—fortunately—it can't be long before I receive my appointment.

Brack. Well, you see—such things are often apt to hang fire for a time.

Tesman. Have you heard anything definite? Eh?

Brack. Nothing exactly definite—. [*Interrupting himself.*] But by-the-bye—I have one piece of news for you.

Tesman. Well?

Brack. Your old friend, Eilert Lövborg, has returned to town.

Tesman. I know that already.

Brack. Indeed! How did you learn it?

Tesman. From that lady who went out with Hedda.

Brack. Really? What was her name? I didn't quite catch it.

Tesman. Mrs. Elvsted.

Brack. Aha—Sheriff Elvsted's wife? Of

course—he has been living up in their regions.

Tesman. And fancy—I'm delighted to hear that he is quite a reformed character!

Brack. So they say.

Tesman. And then he has published a new book—eh?

Brack. Yes, indeed he has.

Tesman. And I hear it has made some sensation!

Brack. Quite an unusual sensation.

Tesman. Fancy—isn't that good news! A man of such extraordinary talents——. I felt so grieved to think that he had gone irretrievably to ruin.

Brack. That was what everybody thought.

Tesman. But I cannot imagine what he will take to now! How in the world will he be able to make his living? Eh?

[*During the last words, HEDDA has entered by the hall door.*]

Hedda. [*To BRACK, laughing with a touch of scorn.*] *Tesman* is forever worrying about how people are to make their living.

Tesman. Well, you see, dear—we were talking about poor *Eilert Lövborg*.

Hedda. [*Glancing at him rapidly.*] Oh, indeed? [*Sits herself in the arm-chair beside the stove and asks indifferently.*] What is the matter with him?

Tesman. Well—no doubt he has run through all his property long ago; and he can scarcely write a new book every year—eh? So I really can't see what is to become of him.

Brack. Perhaps I can give you some information on that point.

Tesman. Indeed!

Brack. You must remember that his relations have a good deal of influence.

Tesman. Oh, his relations, unfortunately, have entirely washed their hands of him.

Brack. At one time they called him the hope of the family.

Tesman. At one time, yes! But he has put an end to all that.

Hedda. Who knows? [*With a slight smile.*] I hear they have reclaimed him up at Sheriff *Elvsted's*——

Brack. And then this book that he has published——

Tesman. Well, well, I hope to goodness they may find something for him to do. I have just written to him. I asked him to come and see us this evening, *Hedda* dear.

Brack. But my dear fellow, you are booked for my bachelors' party this evening. You promised on the pier last night.

Hedda. Had you forgotten, *Tesman*?

Tesman. Yes, I had utterly forgotten.

Brack. But it doesn't matter, for you may be sure he won't come.

Tesman. What makes you think that? Eh?

Brack. [*With a little hesitation, rising and resting his hands on the back of his chair.*] My dear *Tesman*—and you too, *Mrs. Tesman*—I think I ought not to keep you in the dark about something that—that——

Tesman. That concerns *Eilert*——?

Brack. Both you and him.

Tesman. Well, my dear *Judge*, out with it.

Brack. You must be prepared to find your appointment deferred longer than you desired or expected.

Tesman. [*Jumping up uneasily.*] Is there some hitch about it? Eh?

Brack. The nomination may perhaps be made conditional on the result of a competition——

Tesman. Competition! Think of that, *Hedda*!

Hedda. [*Leans further back in the chair.*] Aha—aha!

Tesman. But who can my competitor be? Surely not——?

Brack. Yes, precisely—*Eilert Lövborg*.

Tesman. [*Clasping his hands.*] No, no—it's quite inconceivable! Quite impossible! Eh?

Brack. H'm—that is what it may come to, all the same.

Tesman. Well but, *Judge Brack*—it would show the most incredible lack of consideration for me. [*Gesticulates with his arms.*] For—just think—I'm a married man! We have married on the strength of these prospects, *Hedda* and I; and run deep into debt; and borrowed money from Aunt *Julia* too. Good heavens, they had as good as promised me the appointment. Eh?

Brack. Well, well, well—no doubt you will get it in the end; only after a contest.

Hedda. [*Immovable in her arm-chair.*] Fancy, *Tesman*, there will be a sort of sporting interest in that.

Tesman. Why, my dearest *Hedda*, how can you be so indifferent about it?

Hedda. [*As before.*] I am not at all indifferent. I am most eager to see who wins.

Brack. In any case, *Mrs. Tesman*, it is best that you should know how matters stand. I mean—before you set about the little purchases I hear you are threatening.

Hedda. This can make no difference.

Brack. Indeed! Then I have no more to say. Good-by! [*To TESMAN.*] I shall look in on my way back from my afternoon walk, and take you home with me.

Tesman. Oh yes, yes—your news has quite upset me.

Hedda. [*Reclining, holds out her hand.*] Good-by, Judge; and be sure you call in the afternoon.

Brack. Many thanks. Good-by, good-by!

Tesman. [*Accompanying him to the door.*] Good-by, my dear Judge! You must really excuse me—

[*JUDGE BRACK goes out by the hall door.*]

Tesman. [*Crosses the room.*] Oh Hedda—one should never rush into adventures. Eh?

Hedda. [*Looks at him, smiling.*] Do you do that?

Tesman. Yes, dear—there is no denying—it was adventurous to go and marry and set up house upon mere expectations.

Hedda. Perhaps you are right there.

Tesman. Well—at all events, we have our delightful home, Hedda! Fancy, the home we both dreamed of—the home we were in love with, I may almost say. Eh?

Hedda. [*Rising slowly and wearily.*] It was part of our compact that we were to go into society—to keep open house.

Tesman. Yes, if you only knew how I had been looking forward to it! Fancy—to see you as hostess—in a select circle! Eh? Well, well, well—for the present we shall have to get on without society, Hedda—only to in-

vite Aunt Julie now and then.—Oh, I intended you to lead such an utterly different life, dear—!

Hedda. Of course I cannot have my man in livery just yet.

Tesman. Oh no, unfortunately. It would be out of the question for us to keep a footman, you know.

Hedda. And the saddle-horse I was to have had—

Tesman. [*Aghast.*] The saddle-horse!

Hedda. —I suppose I must not think of that now.

Tesman. Good heavens, no!—that's as clear as daylight.

Hedda. [*Goes up the room.*] Well, I shall have one thing at least to kill time with in the meanwhile.

Tesman. [*Beaming.*] Oh, thank heaven for that! What is it, Hedda? Eh?

Hedda. [*In the middle doorway, looks at him with covert scorn.*] My pistols, George.

Tesman. [*In alarm.*] Your pistols!

Hedda. [*With cold eyes.*] General Gabler's pistols.

[*She goes out through the inner room, to the left.*]

Tesman. [*Rushes up to the middle doorway and calls after her.*] No, for heaven's sake, Hedda darling—don't touch those dangerous things! For my sake, Hedda! Eh?

CURTAIN

ACT SECOND

The room at the Tesmans' as in the First Act, except that the piano has been removed, and an elegant little writing-table with book-shelves put in its place. A smaller table stands near the sofa on the left. Most of the bouquets have been taken away. MRS. ELVSTED'S bouquet is upon the large table in front.—It is afternoon.

[*HEDDA, dressed to receive callers, is alone in the room. She stands by the open glass door, loading a revolver. The fellow to it lies in an open pistol-case on the writing-table.*]

Hedda. [*Looks down the garden, and calls.*] So you are here again, Judge!

Brack. [*Is heard calling from a distance.*] As you see, Mrs. Tesman!

Hedda. [*Raises the pistol and points.*] Now I'll shoot you, Judge Brack!

Brack. [*Calling unseen.*] No, no, no! Don't stand aiming at me!

Hedda. This is what comes of sneaking in by the back way.¹ [*She fires.*]

Brack. [*Nearer.*] Are you out of your senses—?

Hedda. Dear me—did I happen to hit you?

Brack. [*Still outside.*] I wish you would let these pranks alone!

Hedda. Come in then, Judge.

[*JUDGE BRACK, dressed as though for a men's party, enters by the glass door. He carries a light overcoat over his arm.*]

Brack. What the deuce—haven't you tired of that sport, yet? What are you shooting at?

Hedda. Oh, I am only firing in the air.

¹ "Bagveje" means both "back ways" and "under-hand courses."

Brack. [*Gently takes the pistol out of her hand.*] Allow me, Madam! [*Looks at it.*] Ah—I know this pistol well! [*Looks around.*] Where is the case? Ah, here it is. [*Lays the pistol in it, and shuts it.*] Now we won't play at that game any more today.

Hedda. Then what in heaven's name would you have me do with myself?

Brack. Have you had no visitors?

Hedda. [*Closing the glass door.*] Not one. I suppose all our set are still out of town.

Brack. And is Tesman not at home either?

Hedda. [*At the writing-table, putting the pistol-case in a drawer which she shuts.*] No. He rushed off to his aunt's directly after lunch; he didn't expect you so early.

Brack. H'm—how stupid of me not to have thought of that!

Hedda. [*Turning her head to look at him.*] Why stupid?

Brack. Because if I had thought of it I should have come a little—earlier.

Hedda. [*Crossing the room.*] Then you would have found no one to receive you; for I have been in my room changing my dress ever since lunch.

Brack. And is there no sort of little think that we could hold a parley through?

Hedda. You have forgotten to arrange one.

Brack. That was another piece of stupidity.

Hedda. Well, we must just settle down here—and wait. Tesman is not likely to be back for some time yet.

Brack. Never mind; I shall not be impatient.

[*HEDDA seats herself in the corner of the sofa. BRACK lays his overcoat over the back of the nearest chair, and sits down, but keeps his hat in his hand. A short silence. They look at each other.*]

Hedda. Well?

Brack. [*In the same tone.*] Well?

Hedda. I spoke first.

Brack. [*Bending a little forward.*] Come, let us have a cosy little chat, Mrs. Hedda.¹

Hedda. [*Leaning further back in the sofa.*] Does it not seem like a whole eternity since our last talk? Of course I don't count those few words yesterday evening and this morning.

Brack. You mean since our last confidential talk? Our last tête-à-tête?

Hedda. Well, yes—since you put it so.

Brack. Not a day has passed but I have wished that you were home again.

Hedda. And I have done nothing but wish the same thing.

Brack. You? Really, Mrs. Hedda? And I thought you had been enjoying your tour so much!

Hedda. Oh yes, you may be sure of that!

Brack. But Tesman's letters spoke of nothing but happiness.

Hedda. Oh, Tesman! You see, he thinks nothing so delightful as grubbing in libraries and making copies of old parchments, or whatever you can call them.

Brack. [*With a spice of malice.*] Well, that is his vocation in life—or part of it at any rate.

Hedda. Yes, of course; and no doubt when it's your vocation—. But I! Oh, my dear Mr. Brack, how mortally bored I have been.

Brack. [*Sympathetically.*] Do you really say so? In downright earnest?

Hedda. Yes, you can surely understand it—! To go for six whole months without meeting a soul that knew anything of our circle, or could talk about the things we are interested in.

Brack. Yes, yes—I too should feel that a deprivation.

Hedda. And then, what I found most intolerable of all—

Brack. Well?

Hedda. —was being everlastingly in the company of—one and the same person—

Brack. [*With a nod of assent.*] Morning, noon, and night, yes—at all possible times and seasons.

Hedda. I said “everlastingly.”

Brack. Just so. But I should have thought, with our excellent Tesman, one could—

Hedda. Tesman is—a specialist, my dear Judge.

Brack. Undeniably.

Hedda. And specialists are not at all amusing to travel with. Not in the long run at any rate.

Brack. Not even—the specialist one happens to love?

Hedda. Faugh—don't use that sickening word!

Brack. [*Taken aback.*] What do you say, Mrs. Hedda?

Hedda. [*Half laughing, half irritated.*] You should just try it! To hear of nothing but the history of civilization, morning, noon, and night—

Brack. Everlastingly.

Hedda. Yes, yes, yes! And then all this about the domestic industry of the middle

¹ As this form of address is contrary to English usage, and as the note of familiarity would be lacking in “Mrs. Tesman,” Brack may, in stage representation, say “Miss Hedda,” thus ignoring her marriage and reverting to the form of address no doubt customary between them of old.

ages——! That's the most disgusting part of it!

Brack. [*Looks searchingly at her.*] But tell me—in that case, how am I to understand your——? H'm——

Hedda. My accepting George Tesman, you mean?

Brack. Well, let us put it so.

Hedda. Good heavens, do you see anything so wonderful in that?

Brack. Yes and no—Mrs. Hedda.

Hedda. I had positively danced myself tired, my dear Judge. My day was done—— [*With a slight shudder.*] Oh no—I won't say that; nor think it either!

Brack. You have assuredly no reason to.

Hedda. Oh, reasons—— [*Watching him closely.*] And George Tesman—after all, you must admit that he is correctness itself.

Brack. His correctness and respectability are beyond all question.

Hedda. And I don't see anything absolutely ridiculous about him.—Do you?

Brack. Ridiculous? N-no—I shouldn't exactly say so——

Hedda. Well—and his powers of research, at all events, are untiring.—I see no reason why he should not one day come to the front, after all.

Brack. [*Looks at her hesitatingly.*] I thought that you, like every one else, expected him to attain the highest distinction.

Hedda. [*With an expression of fatigue.*] Yes, so I did.—And then, since he was bent, at all hazards, on being allowed to provide for me—I really don't know why I should not have accepted his offer.

Brack. No—if you look at it in that light——

Hedda. It was more than any other adorers were prepared to do for me, my dear Judge.

Brack. [*Laughing.*] Well, I can't answer for all the rest; but as for myself, you know quite well that I have always entertained a— a certain respect for the marriage tie—for marriage as an institution, Mrs. Hedda.

Hedda. [*Jestingly.*] Oh, I assure you I have never cherished any hopes with respect to you.

Brack. All I require is a pleasant and intimate interior, where I can make myself useful in every way, and am free to come and go as—as a trusted friend——

Hedda. Of the master of the house, do you mean?

Brack. [*Bowing.*] Frankly—of the mistress first of all; but of course of the master too, in the second place. Such a triangular friendship—if I may call it so—is really a

great convenience for all parties, let me tell you.

Hedda. Yes, I have many a time longed for someone to make a third on our travels. Oh—those railway-carriage tête-à-têtes——!

Brack. Fortunately your wedding journey is over now.

Hedda. [*Shaking her head.*] Not by a long—long way. I have only arrived at a station on the line.

Brack. Well, then the passengers jump out and move about a little, Mrs. Hedda.

Hedda. I never jump out.

Brack. Really?

Hedda. No—because there is always someone standing by to——

Brack. [*Laughing.*] To look at your ankles, do you mean?

Hedda. Precisely.

Brack. Well, but, dear me——

Hedda. [*With a gesture of repulsion.*] I won't have it. I would rather keep my seat where I happen to be—and continue the tête-à-tête.

Brack. But suppose a third person were to jump in and join the couple.

Hedda. Ah—that is quite another matter!

Brack. A trusted, sympathetic friend——

Hedda. ——with a fund of conversation on all sorts of lively topics——

Brack. ——and not the least bit of a specialist!

Hedda. [*With an audible sigh.*] Yes, that would be a relief indeed.

Brack. [*Hears the front door open, and glances in that direction.*] The triangle is completed.

Hedda. [*Half aloud.*] And on goes the train.

[GEORGE TESMAN, in a gray walking-suit, with a soft felt hat, enters from the hall. He has a number of unbound books under his arm and in his pockets.]

Tesman. [*Goes up to the table beside the corner settee.*] Ouf—what a load for a warm day—all these books. [*Lays them on the table.*] I'm positively perspiring, Hedda. Hallo—are you there already, my dear Judge? Eh? Berta didn't tell me.

Brack. [*Rising.*] I came in through the garden.

Hedda. What books have you got there?

Tesman. [*Stands looking them through.*] Some new books on my special subjects—quite indispensable to me.

Hedda. Your special subjects?

Brack. Yes, books on his special subjects, Mrs. Tesman.

[BRACK and HEDDA exchange a confidential smile.]

Hedda. Do you need still more books on your special subjects?

Tesman. Yes, my dear Hedda, one can never have too many of them. Of course one must keep up with all that is written and published.

Hedda. Yes, I suppose one must.

Tesman. [*Searching among his books.*] And look here—I have got hold of Eilert Lövborg's new book too. [*Offering it to her.*] Perhaps you would like to glance through it, Hedda? Eh?

Hedda. No, thank you. Or rather—afterwards perhaps.

Tesman. I looked into it a little on the way home.

Brack. Well, what do you think of it—as a specialist?

Tesman. I think it shows quite remarkable soundness of judgment. He never wrote like that before. [*Putting the books together.*] Now I shall take all these into my study. I'm longing to cut the leaves—! And then I must change my clothes. [*To BRACK.*] I suppose we needn't start just yet? Eh?

Brack. Oh, dear no—there is not the slightest hurry.

Tesman. Well then, I will take my time. [*Is going with his books, but stops in the doorway and turns.*] By-the-bye, Hedda—Aunt Julia is not coming this evening.

Hedda. Not coming? Is it that affair of the bonnet that keeps her away?

Tesman. Oh, not at all. How could you think such a thing of Aunt Julia? Just fancy—! The fact is, Aunt Rina is very ill.

Hedda. She always is.

Tesman. Yes, but today she is much worse than usual, poor dear.

Hedda. Oh, then it's only natural that her sister should remain with her. I must bear my disappointment.

Tesman. And you can't imagine, dear, how delighted Aunt Julia seemed to be—because you had come home looking so flourishing!

Hedda. [*Half aloud, rising.*] Oh, those everlasting Aunts!

Tesman. What?

Hedda. [*Going to the glass door.*] Nothing.

Tesman. Oh, all right.

[*He goes through the inner room, out to the right.*]

Brack. What bonnet were you talking about?

Hedda. Oh, it was a little episode with Miss Tesman this morning. She had laid down her bonnet on the chair there—[*Looks at him and smiles.*]—and I pretended to think it was the servant's.

Brack. [*Shaking his head.*] Now my dear Mrs. Hedda, how could you do such a thing? To that excellent old lady, too!

Hedda. [*Nervously crossing the room.*] Well, you see—these impulses come over me all of a sudden; and I cannot resist them. [*Throws herself down in the easy-chair by the stove.*] Oh, I don't know how to explain it.

Brack. [*Behind the easy-chair.*] You are not really happy—that is at the bottom of it.

Hedda. [*Looking straight before her.*] I know of no reason why I should be—happy. Perhaps you can give me one?

Brack. Well—amongst other things, because you have got exactly the home you had set your heart on.

Hedda. [*Looks up at him and laughs.*] Do you too believe in that legend?

Brack. Is there nothing in it, then?

Hedda. Oh yes, there is something in it.

Brack. Well?

Hedda. There is this in it, that I made use of Tesman to see me home from evening parties last summer—

Brack. I, unfortunately, had to go quite a different way.

Hedda. That's true. I know you were going a different way last summer.

Brack. [*Laughing.*] Oh fie, Mrs. Hedda! Well, then—you and Tesman—?

Hedda. Well, we happened to pass here one evening; Tesman, poor fellow, was writhing in the agony of having to find conversation; so I took pity on the learned man—

Brack. [*Smiles doubtfully.*] You took pity? H'm—

Hedda. Yes, I really did. And so—to help him out of his torment—I happened to say, in pure thoughtlessness, that I should like to live in this villa.

Brack. No more than that?

Hedda. Not that evening.

Brack. But afterwards?

Hedda. Yes, my thoughtlessness had consequences, my dear Judge.

Brack. Unfortunately that too often happens, Mrs. Hedda.

Hedda. Thanks! So you see it was this enthusiasm for Secretary Falk's villa that first constituted a bond of sympathy between George Tesman and me. From that came our engagement and our marriage, and our wedding journey, and all the rest of it. Well, well, my dear Judge—as you make your bed so you must lie, I could almost say.

Brack. This is exquisite! And you really cared not a rap about it all the time?

Hedda. No, heaven knows I didn't.

Brack. But now? Now that we have made it so homelike for you?

Hedda. Uh—the rooms all seem to smell of lavender and dried rose-leaves.— But perhaps it's Aunt Julia that has brought that scent with her.

Brack. [*Laughing.*] No, I think it must be a legacy from the late Mrs. Secretary Falk.

Hedda. Yes, there is an odor of mortality about it. It reminds me of a bouquet—the day after the ball. [*Clasps her hands behind her head, leans back in her chair and looks at him.*] Oh, my dear Judge—you cannot imagine how horribly I shall bore myself here.

Brack. Why should not you, too, find some sort of vocation in life, Mrs. Hedda?

Hedda. A vocation—that should attract me?

Brack. If possible, of course.

Hedda. Heaven knows what sort of a vocation that could be. I often wonder whether—— [*Breaking off.*] But that would never do either.

Brack. Who can tell? Let me hear what it is.

Hedda. Whether I might not get Tesman to go into politics, I mean.

Brack. [*Laughing.*] Tesman? No, really now, political life is not the thing for him—not at all in his line.

Hedda. No, I daresay not.—But if I could get him into it all the same?

Brack. Why—what satisfaction could you find in that? If he is not fitted for that sort of thing, why should you want to drive him into it?

Hedda. Because I am bored, I tell you! [*After a pause.*] So you think it quite out of the question that Tesman should ever get into the ministry?

Brack. H'm—you see, my dear Mrs. Hedda,—to get into the ministry, he would have to be a tolerably rich man.

Hedda. [*Rising impatiently.*] Yes, there we have it! It is this genteel poverty I have managed to drop into——! [*Crosses the room.*] That is what makes life so pitiable! So utterly ludicrous!—For that's what it is.

Brack. Now I should say the fault lay elsewhere.

Hedda. Where, then?

Brack. You have never gone through any really stimulating experience.

Hedda. Anything serious, you mean?

Brack. Yes, you may call it so. But now you may perhaps have one in store.

Hedda. [*Tossing her head.*] Oh, you're thinking of the annoyances about this wretched professorship! But that must be

Tesman's own affair. I assure you I shall not waste a thought upon it.

Brack. No, no, I daresay not. But suppose now that what people call—in elegant language—a solemn responsibility were to come upon you? [*Smiling.*] A new responsibility, Mrs. Hedda?

Hedda. [*Angrily.*] Be quiet! Nothing of that sort will ever happen.

Brack. [*Warily.*] We will speak of this again a year hence—at the very outside.

Hedda. [*Curtly.*] I have no turn for anything of the sort, Judge Brack. No responsibilities for me!

Brack. Are you so unlike the generality of women as to have no turn for duties which——?

Hedda. [*Beside the glass door.*] Oh, be quiet, I tell you!—I often think there is only one thing in the world I have any turn for.

Brack. [*Drawing near to her.*] And what is that, if I may ask?

Hedda. [*Stands looking out.*] Boring myself to death. Now you know it. [*Turns, looks toward the inner room, and laughs.*] Yes, as I thought! Here comes the Professor.

Brack. [*Softly, in a tone of warning.*] Come, come, come, Mrs. Hedda!

[*GEORGE TESMAN, dressed for the party, with his gloves and hat in his hand, enters from the right through the inner room.*]

Tesman. Hedda, has no message come from Eilert Lövborg? Eh?

Hedda. No.

Tesman. Then you'll see he'll be here presently.

Brack. Do you really think he will come?

Tesman. Yes, I am almost sure of it. For what you were telling us this morning must have been a mere floating rumor.

Brack. You think so?

Tesman. At any rate, Aunt Julia said she did not believe for a moment that he would ever stand in my way again. Fancy that!

Brack. Well then, that's all right.

Tesman. [*Placing his hat and gloves on a chair on the right.*] Yes, but you must really let me wait for him as long as possible.

Brack. We have plenty of time yet. None of my guests will arrive before seven or half-past.

Tesman. Then meanwhile we can keep Hedda company, and see what happens. Eh?

Hedda. [*Placing BRACK'S hat and overcoat upon the corner settee.*] And at the worst Mr. Lövborg can remain here with me.

Brack. [*Offering to take his things.*] Oh,

allow me, Mrs. Tesman!— What do you mean by “at the worst”?

Hedda. If he won't go with you and Tesman.

Tesman. [*Looks dubiously at her.*] But, Hedda dear—do you think it would quite do for him to remain with you? Eh? Remember, Aunt Julia can't come.

Hedda. No, but Mrs. Elvsted is coming. We three can have a cup of tea together.

Tesman. Oh yes, *that* will be all right.

Brack. [*Smiling.*] And that would perhaps be the safest plan for him.

Hedda. Why so?

Brack. Well, you know, Mrs. Tesman, how you used to gird at my little bachelor parties. You declared they were adapted only for men of the strictest principles.

Hedda. But no doubt Mr. Lövborg's principles are strict enough now. A converted sinner—

[BERTA appears at the hall door.]

Berta. There's a gentleman asking if you are at home, ma'am—

Hedda. Well, show him in.

Tesman. [*Softly.*] I'm sure it is he! Fancy that!

[EILERT LÖVBORG enters from the hall. He is slim and lean; of the same age as TESMAN, but looks older and somewhat worn-out. His hair and beard are of a blackish brown, his face long and pale, but with patches of color on the cheek-bones. He is dressed in a well-cut black visiting suit, quite new. He has dark gloves and a silk hat. He stops near the door, and makes a rapid bow, seeming somewhat embarrassed.]

Tesman. [*Goes up to him and shakes him warmly by the hand.*] Well, my dear Eilert—so at last we meet again!

Lövborg. [*Speaks in a subdued voice.*] Thanks for your letter, Tesman. [*Approaching HEDDA.*] Will you too shake hands with me, Mrs. Tesman?

Hedda. [*Taking his hand.*] I am glad to see you, Mr. Lövborg. [*With a motion of her hand.*] I don't know whether you two gentlemen—?

Lövborg. [*Bowing slightly.*] Judge Brack, I think.

Brack. [*Doing likewise.*] Oh yes—in the old days—

Tesman. [*To LÖVBORG, with his hands on his shoulders.*] And now you must make yourself entirely at home, Eilert! Mustn't he, Hedda?—For I hear you are going to settle in town again? Eh?

Lövborg. Yes, I am.

Tesman. Quite right, quite right. Let me

tell you, I have got hold of your new book; but I haven't had time to read it yet.

Lövborg. You may spare yourself the trouble.

Tesman. Why so?

Lövborg. Because there is very little in it.

Tesman. Just fancy—how can you say so?

Brack. But it has been very much praised, I hear.

Lövborg. That was what I wanted; so I put nothing into the book but what every one would agree with.

Brack. Very wise of you.

Tesman. Well, but, my dear Eilert—!

Lövborg. For now I mean to win myself a position again—to make a fresh start.

Tesman. [*A little embarrassed.*] Ah, that is what you wish to do? Eh?

Lövborg. [*Smiling, lays down his hat, and draws a packet, wrapped in paper, from his coat pocket.*] But when this one appears, George Tesman, you will have to read it. For *this* is the real book—the book I have put my true self into.

Tesman. Indeed? And what is it?

Lövborg. It is the continuation.

Tesman. The continuation? Of what?

Lövborg. Of the book.

Tesman. Of the new book?

Lövborg. Of course.

Tesman. Why, my dear Eilert—does it not come down to our own days?

Lövborg. Yes, it does; and this one deals with the future.

Tesman. With the future! But, good heavens, we know nothing of the future!

Lövborg. No; but there is a thing or two to be said about it all the same. [*Opens the packet.*] Look here—

Tesman. Why, that's not your handwriting.

Lövborg. I dictated it. [*Turning over the pages.*] It falls into two sections. The first deals with the civilizing forces of the future. And here is the second— [*Running through the pages toward the end.*] forecasting the probable line of development.

Tesman. How odd now! I should never have thought of writing anything of that sort.

Hedda. [*At the glass door, drumming on the pane.*] H'm—. I daresay not.

Lövborg. [*Replacing the manuscript in its paper and laying the packet on the table.*] I brought it, thinking I might read you a little of it this evening.

Tesman. That was very good of you, Eilert. But this evening—? [*Looking at BRACK.*] I don't quite see how we can manage it—

Lövborg. Well then, some other time. There is no hurry.

Brack. I must tell you, Mr. Lövborg—there is a little gathering at my house this evening—mainly in honor of Tesman, you know—

Lövborg. [*Looking for his hat.*] Oh—then I won't detain you—

Brack. No, but listen—will you not do me the favor of joining us?

Lövborg. [*Curtly and decidedly.*] No, I can't—thank you very much.

Brack. Oh, nonsense—do! We shall be quite a select little circle. And I assure you we shall have a "lively time" as Mrs. Hed— as Mrs. Tesman says.

Lövborg. I have no doubt of it. But nevertheless—

Brack. And then you might bring your manuscript with you, and read it to Tesman at my house. I could give you a room to yourselves.

Tesman. Yes, think of that, Eilert—why shouldn't you? Eh?

Hedda. [*Interposing.*] But, Tesman, if Mr. Lövborg would really rather not! I am sure Mr. Lövborg is much more inclined to remain here and have supper with me.

Lövborg. [*Looking at her.*] With you, Mrs. Tesman?

Hedda. And with Mrs. Elvsted.

Lövborg. Ah— [*Lightly.*] I saw her for a moment this morning.

Hedda. Did you? Well, she is coming this evening. So you see you are almost bound to remain, Mr. Lövborg, or she will have no one to see her home.

Lövborg. That's true. Many thanks, Mrs. Tesman—in that case I will remain.

Hedda. Then I have one or two orders to give the servant—

[*She goes to the hall door and rings.*

BERTA enters. HEDDA talks to her in a whisper, and points toward the inner room. *BERTA nods and goes out again.*]

Tesman. [*At the same time, to LÖVBORG.*] Tell me, Eilert—is it this new subject—the future—that you are going to lecture about?

Lövborg. Yes.

Tesman. They told me at the bookseller's that you are going to deliver a course of lectures this autumn.

Lövborg. That is my intention. I hope you won't take it ill, Tesman.

Tesman. Oh no, not in the least! But—?

Lövborg. I can quite understand that it must be disagreeable to you.

Tesman. [*Cast down.*] Oh, I can't expect you, out of consideration for me, to—

Lövborg. But I shall wait till you have received your appointment.

Tesman. Will you wait? Yes, but—yes, but—are you not going to compete with me? Eh?

Lövborg. No; it is only the moral victory I care for.

Tesman. Why, bless me—then Aunt Julia was right after all! Oh yes—I knew it! Hedda! Just fancy—Eilert Lövborg is not going to stand in our way!

Hedda. [*Curtly.*] Our way? Pray leave me out of the question.

[*She goes up toward the inner room, where BERTA is placing a tray with decanters and glasses on the table. HEDDA nods approval, and comes forward again.*

BERTA goes out.]

Tesman. [*At the same time.*] And you, Judge Brack—what do you say to this? Eh?

Brack. Well, I say that a moral victory—h'm—may be all very fine—

Tesman. Yes, certainly. But all the same—

Hedda. [*Looking at TESMAN with a cold smile.*] You stand there looking as if you were thunderstruck—

Tesman. Yes—so I am—I almost think—

Brack. Don't you see, Mrs. Tesman, a thunderstorm has just passed over?

Hedda. [*Pointing toward the inner room.*] Will you not take a glass of cold punch, gentlemen?

Brack. [*Looking at his watch.*] A stirrup cup? Yes, it wouldn't come amiss.

Tesman. A capital idea, Hedda! Just the thing! Now that the weight has been taken off my mind—

Hedda. Will you not join them, Mr. Lövborg?

Lövborg. [*With a gesture of refusal.*] No, thank you. Nothing for me.

Brack. Why bless me—cold punch is surely not poison.

Lövborg. Perhaps not for everyone.

Hedda. I will keep Mr. Lövborg company in the meantime.

Tesman. Yes, yes, Hedda dear, do.

[*He and BRACK go into the inner room, seat themselves, drink punch, smoke cigarettes, and carry on a lively conversation during what follows. EILERT LÖVBORG remains standing beside the stove. HEDDA goes to the writing-table.*]

Hedda. [*Raising her voice a little.*] Do you care to look at some photographs, Mr. Lövborg? You know Tesman and I made a tour in the Tyrol on our way home?

[*She takes up an album and places it on*

the table beside the sofa in the further corner of which she seats herself. EILERT LÖVBORG approaches, stops and looks at her. Then he takes a chair and seats himself to her left, with his back toward the inner room.]

Hedda. [Opening the album.] Do you see this range of mountains, Mr. Lövborg? It's the Ortler group. Tesman has written the name underneath. Here it is: "The Ortler group near Meran."

Lövborg. [Who has never taken his eyes off her, says softly and slowly.] Hedda—Gabler!

Hedda. [Glancing hastily at him.] Ah! Hush!

Lövborg. [Repeats softly.] Hedda Gabler!

Hedda. [Looking at the album.] That was my name in the old days—when we two knew each other.

Lövborg. And I must teach myself never to say Hedda Gabler again—never, as long as I live.

Hedda. [Still turning over the pages.] Yes, you must. And I think you ought to practice in time. The sooner the better, I should say.

Lövborg. [In a tone of indignation.] Hedda Gabler married! And married to—George Tesman!

Hedda. Yes—so the world goes.

Lövborg. Oh, Hedda, Hedda—how could you¹ throw yourself away!

Hedda. [Looks sharply at him.] What? I can't allow this!

Lövborg. What do you mean?

[TESMAN comes into the room and goes toward the sofa.]

Hedda. [Hears him coming and says in an indifferent tone.] And this is a view from the Val d'Ampezo, Mr. Lövborg. Just look at these peaks! *[Looks affectionately up at TESMAN.]* What's the name of these curious peaks, dear?

Tesman. Let me see. Oh, those are the Dolomites.

Hedda. Yes, that's it!—Those are the Dolomites, Mr. Lövborg.

Tesman. Hedda dear—I only wanted to ask whether I shouldn't bring you a little punch after all? For yourself at any rate—eh?

Hedda. Yes, do, please; and perhaps a few biscuits.

Tesman. No cigarettes?

Hedda. No.

Tesman. Very well.

[He goes into the inner room and out to the right. BRACK sits in the inner room, and keeps an eye from time to time on HEDDA and LÖVBORG.]

Lövborg. [Softly, as before.] Answer me, Hedda—how could you go and do this?

Hedda. [Apparently absorbed in the album.] If you continue to say *du* to me I won't talk to you.

Lövborg. May I not say *du* even when we are alone?

Hedda. No. You may think it; but you mustn't say it.

Lövborg. Ah, I understand it. It is an offense against George Tesman, whom you¹—love.

Hedda. [Glances at him and smiles.] Love? What an idea!

Lövborg. You don't love him then!

Hedda. But I won't hear of any sort of unfaithfulness. Remember that.

Lövborg. Hedda—answer me one thing

—*Hedda.* Hush!

[TESMAN enters with a small tray from the inner room.]

Tesman. Here you are! Isn't this tempting? *[He puts the tray on the table.]*

Hedda. Why do you bring it yourself?

Tesman. [Filling the glasses.] Because I think it's such fun to wait upon you, Hedda.

Hedda. But you have poured out two glasses. Mr. Lövborg said he wouldn't have any—

Tesman. No, but Mrs. Elvsted will soon be here, won't she?

Hedda. Yes, by-the-bye—Mrs. Elvsted

—*Tesman.* Had you forgotten her? Eh?

Hedda. We were so absorbed in these photographs. *[Shows him a picture.]* Do you remember this little village?

Tesman. Oh, it's that one just below the Brenner Pass. It was there we passed the night—

Hedda. —and met that lively party of tourists.

Tesman. Yes, that was the place. Fancy—if we could only have had you with us, Eilert! Eh?

[He returns to the inner room and sits beside BRACK.]

Lövborg. Answer me this one thing, Hedda—

Hedda. Well?

Lövborg. Was there no love in your friendship for me either? Not a spark—not a tinge of love in it?

¹ He uses the familiar *du*.

¹ From this point onward Lövborg uses the formal *De*.

Hedda. I wonder if there was? To me it seems as though we were two good comrades—two thoroughly intimate friends. [*Smilingly.*] You especially were frankness itself.

Løvborg. It was you that made me so.

Hedda. As I look back upon it all, I think there was really something beautiful, something fascinating—something daring—in—in that secret intimacy—that comradeship which no living creature so much as dreamed of.

Løvborg. Yes, yes, Hedda! Was there not?—When I used to come to your father's in the afternoon—and the General sat over at the window reading his papers—with his back toward us—

Hedda. And we two on the corner sofa—

Løvborg. Always with the same illustrated paper before us—

Hedda. For want of an album, yes.

Løvborg. Yes, Hedda, and when I made my confessions to you—told you about myself, things that at that time no one else knew! There I would sit and tell you of my escapades—my days and nights and devilment. Oh, Hedda—what was the power in you that forced me to confess these things?

Hedda. Do you think it was any power in me?

Løvborg. How else can I explain it? And all those—those roundabout questions you used to put to me—

Hedda. Which you understood so particularly well—

Løvborg. How could you sit and question me like that? Question me quite frankly—

Hedda. In roundabout terms, please observe.

Løvborg. Yes, but frankly nevertheless. Cross-question me about—all that sort of thing?

Hedda. And how could you answer, Mr. Løvborg?

Løvborg. Yes, that is just what I can't understand—in looking back upon it. But tell me now, Hedda—was there not love at the bottom of our friendship? On your side, did you not feel as though you might purge my stains away—if I made you my confessor? Was it not so?

Hedda. No, not quite.

Løvborg. What was your motive, then?

Hedda. Do you think it quite incomprehensible that a young girl—when it can be done—without anyone knowing—

Løvborg. Well?

Hedda. —should be glad to have a peep, now and then, into a world which—

Løvborg. Which—?

Hedda. —which she is forbidden to know anything about?

Løvborg. So *that* was it?

Hedda. Partly. Partly—I almost think.

Løvborg. Comradeship in the thirst for life. But why should not *that*, at any rate, have continued?

Hedda. The fault was yours.

Løvborg. It was you that broke with me.

Hedda. Yes, when our friendship threatened to develop into something more serious. Shame upon you, Eilert Løvborg! How could you think of wronging your—your frank comrade?

Løvborg. [*Clenching his hands.*] Oh, why did you not carry out your threat? Why did you not shoot me down?

Hedda. Because I have such a dread of scandal.

Løvborg. Yes, Hedda, you are a coward at heart.

Hedda. A terrible coward. [*Changing her tone.*] But it was a lucky thing for you. And now you have found ample consolation at the Elvsteds'.

Løvborg. I know what Thea has confided to you.

Hedda. And perhaps you have confided to her something about us?

Løvborg. Not a word. She is too stupid to understand anything of that sort.

Hedda. Stupid?

Løvborg. She is stupid about matters of that sort.

Hedda. And I am cowardly. [*Bends over toward him, without looking him in the face, and says more softly.*] But now I will confide something to you.

Løvborg. [*Eagerly.*] Well?

Hedda. The fact that I dared not shoot you down—

Løvborg. Yes!

Hedda. —that was not my most arrant cowardice—that evening.

Løvborg. [*Looks at her a moment, understands, and whispers passionately.*] Oh, Hedda! Hedda Gabler! Now I begin to see a hidden reason beneath our comradeship! You¹ and I—! After all, then it was your craving for life—

Hedda. [*Softly, with a sharp glance.*] Take care! Believe nothing of the sort!

[*Twilight has begun to fall. The hall door is opened from without by BERTA.*]

Hedda. [*Closes the album with a bang and calls smilingly.*] Ah, at last! My darling Thea—come along!

¹ In this speech he once more says *du*. Hedda addresses him throughout as *De*.

[MRS. ELVSTED *enters from the hall. She is in evening dress. The door is closed behind her.*]

Hedda. [On the sofa, stretches out her arms toward her.] My sweet Thea—you can't think how I have been longing for you!

[MRS. ELVSTED, in passing, exchanges slight salutations with the gentlemen in the inner room, then goes up to the table and gives HEDDA her hand. EILERT LÖVBORG has risen. He and MRS. ELVSTED greet each other with a silent nod.]

Mrs. Elvsted. Ought I to go in and talk to your husband for a moment?

Hedda. Oh, not at all. Leave those two alone. They will soon be going.

Mrs. Elvsted. Are they going out?

Hedda. Yes, to a supper-party.

Mrs. Elvsted. [Quickly, to LÖVBORG.] Not you?

Lövborg. No.

Hedda. Mr. Lövborg remains with us.

Mrs. Elvsted. [Takes a chair and is about to seat herself at his side.] Oh, how nice it is here!

Hedda. No, thank you, my little Thea! Not there! You'll be good enough to come over here to me. I will sit between you.

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, just as you please.

[She goes round the table and seats herself on the sofa on HEDDA's right. LÖVBORG reseats himself on his chair.]

Lövborg. [After a short pause, to HEDDA.] Is not she lovely to look at?

Hedda. [Lightly stroking her hair.] Only to look at?

Lövborg. Yes. For *we* two—she and I—we are two real comrades. We have absolute faith in each other; so we can sit and talk with perfect frankness—

Hedda. Not roundabout, Mr. Lövborg?

Lövborg. Well—

Mrs. Elvsted. [Softly clinging close to HEDDA.] Oh, how happy I am, Hedda! For, only think, he says I have inspired him too.

Hedda. [Looks at her with a smile.] Ah! Does he say that, dear?

Lövborg. And then she is so brave, Mrs. Tesman!

Mrs. Elvsted. Good heavens—am I brave?

Lövborg. Exceedingly—where your comrade is concerned.

Hedda. Ah yes—courage! If one only had that!

Lövborg. What then? What do you mean?

Hedda. Then life would perhaps be livable, after all. [With a sudden change of tone.] But now, my dearest Thea, you really must have a glass of cold punch.

Mrs. Elvsted. No, thanks—I never take anything of that kind.

Hedda. Well then, you, Mr. Lövborg.

Lövborg. Nor I, thank you.

Mrs. Elvsted. No, he doesn't either.

Hedda. [Looks fixedly at him.] But if I say you shall?

Lövborg. It would be no use.

Hedda. [Laughing.] Then I, poor creature, have no sort of power over you?

Lövborg. Not in that respect.

Hedda. But seriously, I think you ought to—for your own sake.

Mrs. Elvsted. Why, Hedda—!

Lövborg. How so?

Hedda. Or rather on account of other people.

Lövborg. Indeed?

Hedda. Otherwise people might be apt to suspect that—in your heart of hearts—you did not feel quite secure—quite confident in yourself.

Mrs. Elvsted. [Softly.] Oh please, Hedda—

Lövborg. People may suspect what they like—for the present.

Mrs. Elvsted. [Joyfully.] Yes, let them!

Hedda. I saw it plainly in Judge Brack's face a moment ago.

Lövborg. What did you see?

Hedda. His contemptuous smile, when you dared not go with them into the inner room.

Lövborg. Dared not? Of course I preferred to stop here and talk to you.

Mrs. Elvsted. What could be more natural, Hedda?

Hedda. But the Judge could not guess that. And I saw, too, the way he smiled and glanced at Tesman when you dared not accept his invitation to this wretched little supper-party of his.

Lövborg. Dared not! Do you say I dared not?

Hedda. I don't say so. But that was how Judge Brack understood it.

Lövborg. Well, let him.

Hedda. Then you are not going with them?

Lövborg. I will stay here with you and Thea.

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, Hedda—how can you doubt that?

Hedda. [Smiles and nods approvingly to LÖVBORG.] Firm as a rock! Faithful to your principles, now and forever! Ah, that is how a man should be! [Turns to MRS. ELVSTED and caresses her.] Well now, what did I tell you, when you came to us this morning in such a state of distraction—

Lövborg. [Surprised.] Distraction!

Mrs. Elvsted. [Terrified.] Hedda—oh Hedda—!

Hedda. You can see for yourself! You haven't the slightest reason to be in such mortal terror— [Interrupting herself.] There! Now we can all three enjoy ourselves!

Lövborg. [Who has given a start.] Ah—what is all this, Mrs. Tesman?

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh, my God, Hedda! What are you saying? What are you doing?

Hedda. Don't get excited! That horrid Judge Brack is sitting watching you.

Lövborg. So she was in mortal terror! On my account!

Mrs. Elvsted. [Softly and piteously.] Oh, Hedda—now you have ruined everything!

Lövborg. [Looks fixedly at her for a moment. His face is distorted.] So that was my comrade's frank confidence in me?

Mrs. Elvsted. [Imploringly.] Oh, my dearest friend—only let me tell you—

Lövborg. [Takes one of the glasses of punch, raises it to his lips, and says in a low, husky voice.] Your health, Thea!

[He empties the glass, puts it down, and takes the second.]

Mrs. Elvsted. [Softly.] Oh, Hedda, Hedda—how could you do this?

Hedda. I do it? I? Are you crazy?

Lövborg. Here's to your health too, Mrs. Tesman. Thanks for the truth. Hurrah for the truth!

[He empties the glass and is about to refill it.]

Hedda. [Lays her hand on his arm.] Come, come—no more for the present. Remember you are going out to supper.

Mrs. Elvsted. No, no, no!

Hedda. Hush! They are sitting watching you.

Lövborg. [Putting down the glass.] Now, Thea—tell me the truth—

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes.

Lövborg. Did your husband know that you had come after me?

Mrs. Elvsted. [Wringing her hands.] Oh, Hedda—do you hear what he is asking?

Lövborg. Was it arranged between you and him that you were to come to town and look after me? Perhaps it was the Sheriff himself that urged you to come? Aha, my dear—no doubt he wanted my help in his office! Or was it at the card-table that he missed me?

Mrs. Elvsted. [Softly, in agony.] Oh, Lövborg, Lövborg—!

Lövborg. [Seizes a glass and is on the point of filling it.] Here's a glass for the old Sheriff too!

Hedda. [Preventing him.] No more just now. Remember, you have to read your manuscript to Tesman.

Lövborg. [Calmly, putting down the glass.] It was stupid of me, all this, Thea—to take it in this way, I mean. Don't be angry with me, my dear, dear comrade. You shall see—both you and the others—that if I was fallen once—now I have risen again! Thanks to you, Thea.

Mrs. Elvsted. [Radiant with joy.] Oh, heaven be praised—!

[BRACK has in the meantime looked at his watch. He and TESMAN rise and come into the drawing-room.]

Brack. [Takes his hat and overcoat.] Well, Mrs. Tesman, our time has come.

Hedda. I suppose it has.

Lövborg. [Rising.] Mine too, Judge Brack.

Mrs. Elvsted. [Softly and imploringly.] Oh, Lövborg, don't do it!

Hedda. [Pinching her arm.] They can hear you!

Mrs. Elvsted. [With a suppressed shriek.] Ow!

Lövborg. [To BRACK.] You were good enough to invite me.

Brack. Well, are you coming after all?

Lövborg. Yes, many thanks.

Brack. I'm delighted—

Lövborg. [To TESMAN, putting the parcel of manuscript in his pocket.] I should like to show you one or two things before I send it to the printer's.

Tesman. Fancy—that will be delightful. But, Hedda dear, how is Mrs. Elvsted to get home? Eh?

Hedda. Oh, that can be managed somehow.

Lövborg. [Looking toward the ladies.] Mrs. Elvsted? Of course, I'll come again and fetch her. [Approaching.] At ten or thereabouts, Mrs. Tesman? Will that do?

Hedda. Certainly. That will do capitally.

Tesman. Well, then, that's all right. But you must not expect me so early, Hedda.

Hedda. Oh, you may stop as long—as long as ever you please.

Mrs. Elvsted. [Trying to conceal her anxiety.] Well then, Mr. Lövborg—I shall remain here until you come.

Lövborg. [With his hat in his hand.] Pray do, Mrs. Elvsted.

Brack. And now off goes the excursion train, gentlemen! I hope we shall have a lively time, as a certain fair lady puts it.

Hedda. Ah, if only the fair lady could be present unseen—!

Brack. Why unseen?

Hedda. In order to hear a little of your liveliness at first hand, Judge Brack.

Brack. [Laughing.] I should not advise the fair lady to try it.

Tesman. [Also laughing.] Come, you're a nice one, Hedda! Fancy that!

Brack. Well, good-by, good-by, ladies.

Lövborg. [Bowing.] About ten o'clock, then.

[BRACK, LÖVBORG, and TESMAN go out by the hall door. At the same time, BERTA enters from the inner room with a lighted lamp, which she places on the drawing-room table; she goes out by the way she came.]

Mrs. Elvsted. [Who has risen and is wandering restlessly about the room.] Hedda—Hedda—what will come of all this?

Hedda. At ten o'clock—he will be here. I can see him already—with vine-leaves in his hair—flushed and fearless—

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh, I hope he may.

Hedda. And then, you see—then he will have regained control over himself. Then he will be a free man for all his days.

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh God!—if he would only come as you see him now!

Hedda. He will come as I see him—so, and not otherwise! [Rises and approaches THEA.] You may doubt him as long as you

please; I believe in him. And now we will try—

Mrs. Elvsted. You have some hidden motive in this, Hedda!

Hedda. Yes, I have. I want for once in my life to have power to mold a human destiny.

Mrs. Elvsted. Have you not the power?

Hedda. I have not—and have never had it.

Mrs. Elvsted. Not your husband's?

Hedda. Do you think *that* is worth the trouble? Oh, if you could only understand how poor I am. And fate has made you so rich! [Clasps her passionately in her arms.] I think I must burn your hair off, after all.

Mrs. Elvsted. Let me go! Let me go! I am afraid of you, Hedda!

Berta. [In the middle doorway.] Tea is laid in the dining-room, ma'am.

Hedda. Very well. We are coming.

Mrs. Elvsted. No, no, no! I would rather go home alone! At once!

Hedda. Nonsense! First you shall have a cup of tea, you little stupid. And then—at ten o'clock—Eilert Lövborg will be here—with vine-leaves in his hair.

[She drags MRS. ELVSTED almost by force toward the middle doorway.]

CURTAIN

ACT THIRD

The room at the Tesmans'. The curtains are drawn over the middle doorway, and also over the glass door. The lamp, half turned down, and with a shade over it, is burning on the table. In the stove, the door of which stands open, there has been a fire, which is now nearly burnt out.

[MRS. ELVSTED, wrapped in a large shawl, and with her feet upon a foot-rest, sits close to the stove, sunk back in the arm-chair. HEDDA, fully dressed, lies sleeping upon the sofa, with a sofa-blanket over her.]

Mrs. Elvsted. [After a pause, suddenly sits up in her chair, and listens eagerly. Then she sinks back again wearily, moaning to herself.] Not yet!—Oh God—oh God—not yet!

[BERTA slips cautiously in by the hall door. She has a letter in her hand.]

Mrs. Elvsted. [Turns and whispers eagerly.] Well—has any one come?

Berta. [Softly.] Yes, a girl has just brought this letter.

Mrs. Elvsted. [Quickly, holding out her hand.] A letter! Give it to me!

Berta. No, it's for Dr. Tesman, ma'am.

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh, indeed.

Berta. It was Miss Tesman's servant that brought it. I'll lay it here on the table.

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, do.

Berta. [Laying down the letter.] I think I had better put out the lamp. It's smoking.

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, put it out. It must soon be daylight now.

Berta. [Putting out the lamp.] It is daylight already, ma'am.

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, broad day! And no one come back yet—!

Berta. Lord bless you, ma'am—I guessed how it would be.

Mrs. Elvsted. You guessed?

Berta. Yes, when I saw that a certain person had come back to town—and that he

went off with them. For we've heard enough about that gentleman before now.

Mrs. Elvsted. Don't speak so loud. You will waken Mrs. Tesman.

Berta. [*Looks toward the sofa and sighs.*] No, no—let her sleep, poor thing. Shan't I put some wood on the fire?

Mrs. Elvsted. Thanks, not for me.

Berta. Oh, very well.

[*She goes softly out by the hall door.*]

Hedda. [*Is awakened by the shutting of the door, and looks up.*] What's that—?

Mrs. Elvsted. It was only the servant—

Hedda. [*Looking about her.*] Oh, we're here—! Yes, now I remember. [*Sits erect upon the sofa, stretches herself, and rubs her eyes.*] What o'clock is it, Thea?

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Looks at her watch.*] It's past seven.

Hedda. When did Tesman come home?

Mrs. Elvsted. He has not come.

Hedda. Not come home yet?

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Rising.*] No one has come.

Hedda. Think of our watching and waiting here till four in the morning—

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Wringing her hands.*] And how I watched and waited for him!

Hedda. [*Yawns, and says with her hand before her mouth.*] Well, well—we might have spared ourselves the trouble.

Mrs. Elvsted. Did you get a little sleep?

Hedda. Oh yes; I believe I have slept pretty well. Have you not?

Mrs. Elvsted. Not for a moment. I couldn't, Hedda!—not to save my life.

Hedda. [*Rises and goes toward her.*] There, there, there! There's nothing to be so alarmed about. I understand quite well what has happened.

Mrs. Elvsted. Well, what do you think? Won't you tell me?

Hedda. Why, of course it has been a very late affair at Judge Brack's—

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, yes—that is clear enough. But all the same—

Hedda. And then, you see, Tesman hasn't cared to come home and ring us up in the middle of the night. [*Laughing.*] Perhaps he wasn't inclined to show himself either—immediately after a jollification.

Mrs. Elvsted. But in that case—where can he have gone?

Hedda. Of course he has gone to his Aunts' and slept there. They have his old room ready for him.

Mrs. Elvsted. No, he can't be with them; for a letter has just come for him from Miss Tesman. There it lies.

Hedda. Indeed? [*Looks at the address.*] Why yes, it's addressed in Aunt Julia's own

hand. Well then, he has remained at Judge Brack's. And as for Eilert Lövborg—he is sitting, with vine-leaves in his hair, reading his manuscript.

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh Hedda, you are just saying things you don't believe a bit.

Hedda. You really are a little blockhead, Thea.

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh yes, I suppose I am.

Hedda. And how mortally tired you look.

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, I am mortally tired.

Hedda. Well then, you must do as I tell you. You must go into my room and lie down for a little while.

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh no, no—I shouldn't be able to sleep.

Hedda. I am sure you would.

Mrs. Elvsted. Well, but your husband is certain to come soon now; and then I want to know at once—

Hedda. I shall take care to let you know when he comes.

Mrs. Elvsted. Do you promise me, Hedda?

Hedda. Yes, rely upon me. Just you go in and have a sleep in the meantime.

Mrs. Elvsted. Thanks; then I'll try to.

[*She goes off through the inner room.*]

[*HEDDA goes up to the glass door and draws back the curtains. The broad daylight streams into the room. Then she takes a little hand-glass from the writing-table, looks at herself in it, and arranges her hair. Next she goes to the hall door and presses the bell-button. BERTA presently appears at the hall door.*]

Berta. Did you want anything, ma'am?

Hedda. Yes; you must put some more wood in the stove. I am shivering.

Berta. Bless me—I'll make up the fire at once. [*She rakes the embers together and lays a piece of wood upon them; then stops and listens.*] That was a ring at the front door, ma'am.

Hedda. Then go to the door. I will look after the fire.

Berta. It'll soon burn up.

[*She goes out by the hall door.*]

[*HEDDA kneels on the foot-rest and lays some more pieces of wood in the stove. After a short pause, GEORGE TESMAN enters from the hall. He looks tired and rather serious. He steals on tiptoe toward the middle doorway and is about to slip through the curtains.*]

Hedda. [*At the stove, without looking up.*] Good morning.

Tesman. [*Turns.*] Hedda! [*Approaching her.*] Good heavens—are you up so early? Eh?

Hedda. Yes. I am up very early this morning.

Tesman. And I never doubted you were still sound asleep. Fancy that, Hedda!

Hedda. Don't speak so loud. Mrs. Elvsted is resting in my room.

Tesman. Has Mrs. Elvsted been here all night?

Hedda. Yes, since no one came to fetch her.

Tesman. Ah, to be sure.

Hedda. [*Closes the door of the stove and rises.*] Well, did you enjoy yourselves at Judge Brack's?

Tesman. Have you been anxious about me? Eh?

Hedda. No, I should never think of being anxious. But I asked if you had enjoyed yourself.

Tesman. Oh yes—for once in a way. Especially the beginning of the evening; for then Eilert read me part of his book. We arrived more than an hour too early—fancy that! And Brack had all sorts of arrangements to make—so Eilert read to me.

Hedda. [*Seating herself by the table on the right.*] Well? Tell me, then—

Tesman. [*Sitting on a footstool near the stove.*] Oh Hedda, you can't conceive what a book that is going to be! I believe it is one of the most remarkable things that have ever been written. Fancy that!

Hedda. Yes, yes; I don't care about that—

Tesman. I must make a confession to you, Hedda. When he had finished reading—a horrid feeling came over me.

Hedda. A horrid feeling?

Tesman. I felt jealous of Eilert for having had it in him to write such a book. Only think, Hedda!

Hedda. Yes, yes, I am thinking!

Tesman. And then how pitiful to think that he—with all his gifts—should be irremediable, after all.

Hedda. I suppose you mean that he has more courage than the rest?

Tesman. No, not at all—I mean that he is incapable of taking his pleasures in moderation.

Hedda. And what came of it all—in the end?

Tesman. Well, to tell the truth, I think it might best be described as an orgy, Hedda.

Hedda. Had he vine-leaves in his hair?

Tesman. Vine-leaves? No, I saw nothing of the sort. But he made a long, rambling speech in honor of the woman who had inspired him in his work—that was the phrase he used.

Hedda. Did he name her?

Tesman. No, he didn't; but I can't help thinking he meant Mrs. Elvsted. You may be sure he did.

Hedda. Well—where did you part from him?

Tesman. On the way to town. We broke up—the last of us at any rate—all together; and Brack came with us to get a breath of fresh air. And then, you see, we agreed to take Eilert home; for he had had far more than was good for him.

Hedda. I daresay.

Tesman. But now comes the strange part of it, Hedda; or, I should rather say, the melancholy part of it. I declare I am almost ashamed on Eilert's account—to tell you—

Hedda. Oh, go on—!

Tesman. Well, as we were getting near town, you see, I happened to drop a little behind the others. Only for a minute or two—fancy that!

Hedda. Yes, yes, yes, but—?

Tesman. And then, as I hurried after them—what do you think I found by the wayside? Eh?

Hedda. Oh, how should I know!

Tesman. You mustn't speak of it to a soul, Hedda! Do you hear? Promise me, for Eilert's sake. [*Draws a parcel, wrapped in paper, from his coat pocket.*] Fancy, dear—I found this.

Hedda. Is not that the parcel he had with him yesterday?

Tesman. Yes, it is the whole of his precious, irreplaceable manuscript! And he had gone and lost it, and knew nothing about it. Only fancy, Hedda! So deplorably—

Hedda. But why did you not give him back the parcel at once?

Tesman. I didn't dare to—in the state he was then in—

Hedda. Did you not tell any of the others that you had found it?

Tesman. Oh, far from it! You can surely understand that, for Eilert's sake, I wouldn't do that.

Hedda. So no one knows that Eilert Lövborg's manuscript is in your possession?

Tesman. No. And no one *must* know it.

Hedda. Then what did you say to him afterwards?

Tesman. I didn't talk to him again at all; for when we got in among the streets, he and two or three of the others gave us the slip and disappeared. Fancy that!

Hedda. Indeed! They must have taken him home then.

Tesman. Yes, so it would appear. And Brack, too, left us.

Hedda. And what have you been doing with yourself since?

Tesman. Well, I and some of the others went home with one of the party, a jolly fellow, and took our morning coffee with him; or perhaps I should rather call it our night coffee—eh? But now, when I have rested a little, and given Eilert, poor fellow, time to have his sleep out, I must take this back to him.

Hedda. [*Holds out her hand for the packet.*] No—don't give it to him! Not in such a hurry, I mean. Let me read it first.

Tesman. No, my dearest Hedda, I mustn't, I really mustn't.

Hedda. You must not?

Tesman. No—for you can imagine what a state of despair he will be in when he wakens and misses the manuscript. He has no copy of it, you must know! He told me so.

Hedda. [*Looking searchingly at him.*] Can such a thing not be reproduced? Written over again?

Tesman. No, I don't think that would be possible. For the inspiration, you see—

Hedda. Yes, yes—I suppose it depends on that— [*Lightly.*] But, by-the-bye—here is a letter for you.

Tesman. Fancy—!

Hedda. [*Handing it to him.*] It came early this morning.

Tesman. It's from Aunt Julia! What can it be? [*He lays the packet on the other footstool, opens the letter, runs his eye through it, and jumps up.*] Oh, Hedda—she says that poor Aunt Rina is dying!

Hedda. Well, we were prepared for that.

Tesman. And that if I want to see her again, I must make haste. I'll run in to them at once.

Hedda. [*Suppressing a smile.*] Will you run?

Tesman. Oh, my dearest Hedda—if you could only make up your mind to come with me! Just think!

Hedda. [*Rises and says wearily, repelling the idea.*] No, no, don't ask me. I will not look upon sickness and death. I loathe all sorts of ugliness.

Tesman. Well, well, then—! [*Bustling around.*] My hat—? My overcoat—? Oh, in the hall—. I do hope I mayn't come too late, Hedda. Eh?

Hedda. Oh, if you run—

[*BERTA appears at the hall door.*]

Berta. Judge Brack is at the door, and wishes to know if he may come in.

Tesman. At this time! No, I can't possibly see him.

Hedda. But I can. [*To BERTA.*] Ask Judge Brack to come in. [*BERTA goes out.*]

Hedda. [*Quickly, whispering.*] The parcel, Tesman!

[*She snatches it up from the stool.*]

Tesman. Yes, give it to me!

Hedda. No, no, I will keep it till you come back.

[*She goes to the writing-table and places it in the bookcase. TESMAN stands in a flurry of haste, and cannot get his gloves on. JUDGE BRACK enters from the hall.*]

Hedda. [*Nodding to him.*] You are an early bird, I must say.

Brack. Yes, don't you think so? [*To TESMAN.*] Are you on the move, too?

Tesman. Yes, I must rush off to my aunts'. Fancy—the invalid one is lying at death's door, poor creature.

Brack. Dear me, is she indeed? Then on no account let me detain you. At such a critical moment—

Tesman. Yes, I must really rush— Good-by! Good-by!

[*He hastens out by the hall door.*]

Hedda. [*Approaching.*] You seem to have made a particularly lively night of it at your rooms, Judge Brack.

Brack. I assure you I have not had my clothes off, Mrs. Hedda.

Hedda. Not you, either?

Brack. No, as you may see. But what has Tesman been telling you of the night's adventures?

Hedda. Oh, some tiresome story. Only that they went and had coffee somewhere or other.

Brack. I have heard about that coffee-party already. Eilert Lövborg was not with them, I fancy?

Hedda. No, they had taken him home before that.

Brack. Tesman too?

Hedda. No, but some of the others, he said.

Brack. [*Smiling.*] George Tesman is really an ingenuous creature, Mrs. Hedda.

Hedda. Yes, heaven knows he is. Then is there something behind all this?

Brack. Yes, perhaps there may be.

Hedda. Well then, sit down, my dear Judge, and tell your story in comfort.

[*She seats herself to the left of the table. BRACK sits near her, at the long side of the table.*]

Hedda. Now then?

Brack. I had special reasons for keeping

track of my guests—or rather of some of my guests—last night.

Hedda. Of Eilert Lövborg among the rest, perhaps.

Brack. Frankly—yes.

Hedda. Now you make me really curious—

Brack. Do you know where he and one or two of the others finished the night, Mrs. Hedda?

Hedda. If it is not quite unmentionable, tell me.

Brack. Oh no, it's not at all unmentionable. Well, they put in an appearance at a particularly animated soirée.

Hedda. Of the lively kind?

Brack. Of the very liveliest—

Hedda. Tell me more of this, Judge Brack—

Brack. Lövborg, as well as the others, had been invited in advance. I knew all about it. But he had declined the invitation; for now, as you know, he has become a new man.

Hedda. Up at the Elvsteds', yes. But he went after all, then?

Brack. Well, you see, Mrs. Hedda—unhappily the spirit moved him at my rooms last evening—

Hedda. Yes, I hear he found inspiration.

Brack. Pretty violent inspiration. Well, I fancy that altered his purpose; for we menfolk are unfortunately not always so firm in our principles as we ought to be.

Hedda. Oh, I am sure *you* are an exception, Judge Brack. But as to Lövborg—?

Brack. To make a long story short—he landed at last in Mademoiselle Diana's rooms.

Hedda. Mademoiselle Diana's?

Brack. It was Mademoiselle Diana that was giving the soirée, to a select circle of her admirers and her lady friends.

Hedda. Is she a red-haired woman?

Brack. Precisely.

Hedda. A sort of a—singer?

Brack. Oh yes—in her leisure moments. And moreover a mighty huntress—of men—Mrs. Hedda. You have no doubt heard of her. Eilert Lövborg was one of her most enthusiastic protectors—in the days of his glory.

Hedda. And how did all this end?

Brack. Far from amicably, it appears. After a most tender meeting, they seem to have come to blows—

Hedda. Lövborg and she?

Brack. Yes. He accused her or her friends of having robbed him. He declared that his pocket-book had disappeared—and other

things as well. In short, he seems to have made a furious disturbance.

Hedda. And what came of it all?

Brack. It came to a general scrimmage, in which the ladies as well as the gentlemen took part. Fortunately the police at last appeared on the scene.

Hedda. The police too?

Brack. Yes. I fancy it will prove a costly frolic for Eilert Lövborg, crazy being that he is.

Hedda. How so?

Brack. He seems to have made a violent resistance—to have hit one of the constables on the head and torn the coat off his back. So they had to march him off to the police station with the rest.

Hedda. How have you learnt all this?

Brack. From the police themselves.

Hedda. [*Gazing straight before her.*] So that is what happened. Then he had no vine-leaves in his hair.

Brack. Vine-leaves, Mrs. Hedda?

Hedda. [*Changing her tone.*] But tell me now, Judge—what is your real reason for tracking out Eilert Lövborg's movements so carefully?

Brack. In the first place, it could not be entirely indifferent to me if it should appear in the police-court that he came straight from my house.

Hedda. Will the matter come into court, then?

Brack. Of course. However, I should scarcely have troubled so much about that. But I thought that, as a friend of the family, it was my duty to supply you and Tesman with a full account of his nocturnal exploits.

Hedda. Why so, Judge Brack?

Brack. Why, because I have a shrewd suspicion that he intends to use you as a sort of blind.

Hedda. Oh, how can you think such a thing?

Brack. Good heavens, Mrs. Hedda—we have eyes in our head. Mark my words! This Mrs. Elvsted will be in no hurry to leave town again.

Hedda. Well, even if there should be anything between them, I suppose there are plenty of other places where they could meet.

Brack. Not a single *home*. Henceforth, as before, every respectable house will be closed against Eilert Lövborg.

Hedda. And so ought mine to be, you mean?

Brack. Yes. I confess it would be more than painful to me if this personage were to be made free of your house. How super-

fluous, how intrusive, he would be, if he were to force his way into——

Hedda. —into the triangle?

Brack. Precisely. It would simply mean that I should find myself homeless.

Hedda. [*Looks at him with a smile.*] So you want to be the one cock in the basket¹—that is your aim.

Brack. [*Nods slowly and lowers his voice.*] Yes, that is my aim. And for that I will fight—with every weapon I can command.

Hedda. [*Her smiling vanishing.*] I see you are a dangerous person—when it comes to the point.

Brack. Do you think so?

Hedda. I am beginning to think so. And I am exceedingly glad to think—that you have no sort of hold over me.

Brack. [*Laughing equivocally.*] Well, well, Mrs. Hedda—perhaps you are right there. If I had, who knows what I might be capable of!

Hedda. Come, come now, Judge Brack! That sounds almost like a threat.

Brack. [*Rising.*] Oh, not at all! The triangle, you know, ought, if possible, to be spontaneously constructed.

Hedda. There I agree with you.

Brack. Well, now I have said all I had to say; and I had better be getting back to town. Good-by, Mrs. Hedda.

[*He goes toward the glass door.*]

Hedda. [*Rising.*] Are you going through the garden?

Brack. Yes, it's a short cut for me.

Hedda. And then it is a back way, too.

Brack. Quite so. I have no objection to back ways. They may be piquant enough at times.

Hedda. When there is ball practice going on, you mean?

Brack. [*In the doorway, laughing to her.*] Oh, people don't shoot their tame poultry, I fancy.

Hedda. [*Also laughing.*] Oh no, when there is only one cock in the basket——

[*They exchange laughing nods of farewell. He goes. She closes the door behind him.*]

[*HEDDA, who has become quite serious, stands for a moment looking out. Presently she goes and peeps through the curtain over the middle doorway. Then she goes to the writing-table, takes LÖVBORG'S packet out of the bookcase, and is on the point of looking through its contents. BERTA is heard speaking*

loudly in the hall. HEDDA turns and listens. Then she hastily locks up the packet in the drawer, and lays the key on the inkstand.]

[*EILERT LÖVBORG, with his greatcoat on and his hat in his hand, tears open the hall door. He looks somewhat confused and irritated.*]

Lövborg. [*Looking toward the hall.*] And I tell you I must and will come in! There!

[*He closes the door, turns, sees HEDDA, at once regains his self-control, and bows.*]

Hedda. [*At the writing-table.*] Well, Mr. Lövborg, this is rather a late hour to call for Thea.

Lövborg. You mean rather an early hour to call on you. Pray pardon me.

Hedda. How do you know that she is still here?

Lövborg. They told me at her lodgings that she had been out all night.

Hedda. [*Going to the oval table.*] Did you notice anything about the people of the house when they said that?

Lövborg. [*Looks inquiringly at her.*] Notice anything about them?

Hedda. I mean, did they seem to think it odd?

Lövborg. [*Suddenly understanding.*] Oh, yes, of course! I am dragging her down with me! However, I didn't notice anything.—I suppose Tesman is not up yet?

Hedda. No—I think not——

Lövborg. When did he come home?

Hedda. Very late.

Lövborg. Did he tell you anything?

Hedda. Yes, I gathered that you had had an exceedingly jolly evening at Judge Brack's.

Lövborg. Nothing more?

Hedda. I don't think so. However, I was so dreadfully sleepy——

[*MRS. ELVSTED enters through the curtains of the middle doorway.*]

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Going toward him.*] Ah, Lövborg! At last——!

Lövborg. Yes, at last. And too late!

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Looks anxiously at him.*] What is too late?

Lövborg. Everything is too late now. It is all over with me.

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh no, no—don't say that!

Lövborg. You will say the same when you hear——

Mrs. Elvsted. I won't hear anything!

Hedda. Perhaps you would prefer to talk to her alone? If so, I will leave you.

Lövborg. No, stay—you too. I beg you to stay.

¹ "Eneste hane i kurven"—a proverbial saying.

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, but I won't hear anything, I tell you.

Lövborg. It is not last night's adventures that I want to talk about.

Mrs. Elvsted. What is it then——?

Lövborg. I want to say that now our ways must part.

Mrs. Elvsted. Part!

Hedda. [*Involuntarily.*] I knew it!

Lövborg. You can be of no more service to me, Thea.

Mrs. Elvsted. How can you stand there and say that! No more service to you! Am I not to help you now, as before? Are we not to go on working together?

Lövborg. Henceforward I shall do no work.

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Despairingly.*] Then what am I to do with my life?

Lövborg. You must try to live your life as if you had never known me.

Mrs. Elvsted. But you know I cannot do that!

Lövborg. Try if you cannot, Thea. You must go home again——

Mrs. Elvsted. [*In vehement protest.*] Never in this world! Where you are, there will I be also! I will not let myself be driven away like this! I will remain here! I will be with you when the book appears.

Hedda. [*Half aloud, in suspense.*] Ah yes—the book!

Lövborg. [*Looks at her.*] My book and Thea's; for that is what it is.

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, I feel that it is. And that is why I have a right to be with you when it appears! I will see with my own eyes how respect and honor pour in upon you afresh. And the happiness—the happiness—oh, I must share it with you!

Lövborg. Thea—our book will never appear.

Hedda. Ah!

Mrs. Elvsted. Never appear!

Lövborg. Can never appear.

Mrs. Elvsted. [*In agonized foreboding.*] Lövborg—what have you done with the manuscript?

Hedda. [*Looks anxiously at him.*] Yes, the manuscript——?

Mrs. Elvsted. Where is it?

Lövborg. Oh, Thea—don't ask me about it!

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, yes, I will know. I demand to be told at once.

Lövborg. The manuscript——. Well then—I have torn the manuscript into a thousand pieces.

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Shrieks.*] Oh no, no——!

Hedda. [*Involuntarily.*] But that's not——

Lövborg. [*Looks at her.*] Not true, you think?

Hedda. [*Collecting herself.*] Oh well, of course—since you say so. But it sounded so improbable——

Lövborg. It is true, all the same.

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Wringing her hands.*] Oh God—oh God, Hedda—torn his own work to pieces!

Lövborg. I have torn my own life to pieces. So why should I not tear my life-work too——?

Mrs. Elvsted. And you did this last night?

Lövborg. Yes, I tell you! Tore it into a thousand pieces—and scattered them on the fiord—far out. There, there is cool sea-water at any rate—let them drift upon it—drift with the current and the wind. And then presently they will sink—deeper and deeper—as I shall, Thea.

Mrs. Elvsted. Do you know, Lövborg, that what you have done with the book—I shall think of it to my dying day as though you had killed a little child.

Lövborg. Yes, you are right. It is a sort of child-murder.

Mrs. Elvsted. How could you, then——! Did not the child belong to me too?

Hedda. [*Almost inaudibly.*] Ah, the child——

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Breathing heavily.*] It is all over, then. Well, well, now I will go, Hedda.

Hedda. But you are not going away from town?

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh, I don't know what I shall do. I see nothing but darkness before me.

[*She goes out by the hall door.*]

Hedda. [*Stands waiting for a moment.*] So you are not going to see her home, Mr. Lövborg?

Lövborg. I? Through the streets? Would you have people see her walking with me?

Hedda. Of course I don't know what else may have happened last night. But is it so utterly irretrievable?

Lövborg. It will not end with last night—I know that perfectly well. And the thing is that now I have no taste for that sort of life either. I won't begin it anew. She has broken my courage and my power of braving life out.

Hedda. [*Looking straight before her.*] So that pretty little fool has had her fingers in a man's destiny. [*Looks at him.*] But all the same, how could you treat her so heartlessly?

Lövborg. Oh, don't say that it was heartless!

Hedda. To go and destroy what has filled

her whole soul for months and years! You do not call that heartless!

Lövborg. To you I can tell the truth, Hedda.

Hedda. The truth?

Lövborg. First promise me—give me your word—that what I now confide to you Thea shall never know.

Hedda. I give you my word.

Lövborg. Good. Then let me tell you that what I said just now was untrue.

Hedda. About the manuscript?

Lövborg. Yes. I have not torn it to pieces—nor thrown it into the fiord.

Hedda. No, no—. But—where is it, then?

Lövborg. I have destroyed it none the less—utterly destroyed it, Hedda!

Hedda. I don't understand.

Lövborg. Thea said that what I had done seemed to her like a child-murder.

Hedda. Yes, so she said.

Lövborg. But to kill his child—that is not the worst thing a father can do to it.

Hedda. Not the worst?

Lövborg. No. I wanted to spare Thea from hearing the worst.

Hedda. Then what is the worst?

Lövborg. Suppose now, Hedda, that a man—in the small hours of the morning—came home to his child's mother after a night of riot and debauchery, and said: "Listen—I have been here and there—in this place and in that. And I have taken our child with me—to this place and to that. And I have lost the child—utterly lost it. The devil knows into what hands it may have fallen—who may have had their clutches on it."

Hedda. Well—but when all is said and done, you know—this was only a book—

Lövborg. Thea's pure soul was in that book.

Hedda. Yes, so I understand.

Lövborg. And you can understand, too, that for her and me together no future is possible.

Hedda. What path do you mean to take, then?

Lövborg. None. I will only try to make an end of it all—the sooner the better.

Hedda. [*A step nearer him.*] Eilert Lövborg—listen to me.—Will you not try to—to do it beautifully?

Lövborg. Beautifully? [*Smiling.*] With vine-leaves in my hair, as you used to dream in the old days—?

Hedda. No, no. I have lost my faith in the vine-leaves. But beautifully nevertheless! For once in a way!—Good-by! You must go now—and do not come here any more.

Lövborg. Good-by, Mrs. Tesman. And give George Tesman my love.

[*He is on the point of going.*]

Hedda. No, wait! I must give you a memento to take with you.

[*She goes to the writing-table and opens the drawer and the pistol-case; then returns to LöVBORG with one of the pistols.*]

Lövborg. [*Looks at her.*] This? Is this the memento?

Hedda. [*Nodding slowly.*] Do you recognize it? It was aimed at you once.

Lövborg. You should have used it then.

Hedda. Take it—and do you use it now.

Lövborg. [*Puts the pistol in his breast pocket.*] Thanks!

Hedda. And beautifully, Eilert Lövborg. Promise me that!

Lövborg. Good-by, Hedda Gabler.

[*He goes by the hall door.*]

[*HEDDA listens for a moment at the door. Then she goes up to the writing-table, takes out the packet of manuscript, peeps under the cover, draws a few of the sheets half out, and looks at them. Next she goes over and seats herself in the arm-chair beside the stove, with the packet in her lap. Presently she opens the stove door, and then the packet.*]

Hedda. [*Throws one of the quires into the fire and whispers to herself.*] Now I am burning your child, Thea!—Burning it, curly-locks! [*Throwing one or two more quires into the stove.*] Your child and Eilert Lövborg's. [*Throws the rest in.*] I am burning—I am burning your child.

CURTAIN

ACT FOURTH

The same rooms at the Tesmans'. It is evening. The drawing-room is in darkness. The back room is lighted by the hang-

ing lamp over the table. The curtains over the glass door are drawn close.

[*HEDDA, dressed in black, walks to and*

fro in the dark room. Then she goes into the back room and disappears for a moment to the left. She is heard to strike a few chords on the piano. Presently she comes in sight again, and returns to the drawing-room.

BERTA enters from the right, through the inner room, with a lighted lamp, which she places on the table in front of the corner settee in the drawing-room. Her eyes are red with weeping, and she has black ribbons in her cap. She goes quietly and circumspectly out to the right. HEDDA goes up to the glass door, lifts the curtain a little aside, and looks out into the darkness.

Shortly afterwards, MISS TESMAN, in mourning, with a bonnet and veil on, comes in from the hall. HEDDA goes toward her and holds out her hand.]

Miss Tesman. Yes, Hedda, here I am, in mourning and forlorn; for now my poor sister has at last found peace.

Hedda. I have heard the news already, as you see. Tesman sent me a card.

Miss Tesman. Yes, he promised me he would. But nevertheless I thought that to Hedda—here in the house of life—I ought myself to bring the tidings of death.

Hedda. That was very kind of you.

Miss Tesman. Ah, Rina ought not to have left us just now. This is not the time for Hedda's house to be a house of mourning.

Hedda. [Changing the subject.] She died quite peacefully, did she not, Miss Tesman?

Miss Tesman. Oh, her end was so calm, so beautiful. And then she had the unspeakable happiness of seeing George once more—and bidding him good-by.—Has he not come home yet?

Hedda. No. He wrote that he might be detained. But won't you sit down?

Miss Tesman. No, thank you, my dear, dear Hedda. I should like to, but I have so much to do. I must prepare my dear one for her rest as well as I can. She shall go to her grave looking her best.

Hedda. Can I not help you in any way?

Miss Tesman. Oh, you must not think of it! Hedda Tesman must have no hand in such mournful work. Nor let her thoughts dwell on it either—not at this time.

Hedda. One is not always mistress of one's thoughts—

Miss Tesman. [Continuing.] Ah, yes, it is the way of the world. At home we shall be sewing a shroud; and here there will soon be sewing too, I suppose—but of another sort, thank God!

[GEORGE TESMAN enters by the hall door.]

Hedda. Ah, you have come at last!

Tesman. You here, Aunt Julia? With Hedda? Fancy that!

Miss Tesman. I was just going, my dear boy. Well, have you done all you promised?

Tesman. No; I'm really afraid I have forgotten half of it. I must come to you again tomorrow. Today my brain is all in a whirl. I can't keep my thoughts together.

Miss Tesman. Why, my dear George, you mustn't take it in this way.

Tesman. Mustn't—? How do you mean?

Miss Tesman. Even in your sorrow you must rejoice, as I do—rejoice that she is at rest.

Tesman. Oh yes, yes—you are thinking of Aunt Rina.

Hedda. You will feel lonely now, Miss Tesman.

Miss Tesman. Just at first, yes. But that will not last very long, I hope. I daresay I shall soon find an occupant for poor Rina's little room.

Tesman. Indeed? Who do you think will take it? Eh?

Miss Tesman. Oh, there's always some poor invalid or other in want of nursing, unfortunately.

Hedda. Would you really take such a burden upon you again?

Miss Tesman. A burden! Heaven forgive you, child—it has been no burden to me.

Hedda. But suppose you had a total stranger on your hands—

Miss Tesman. Oh, one soon makes friends with sick folk; and it's such an absolute necessity for me to have someone to live for. Well, heaven be praised, there may soon be something in this house, too, to keep an old aunt busy.

Hedda. Oh, don't trouble about anything here.

Tesman. Yes, just fancy what a nice time we three might have together, if—?

Hedda. If—?

Tesman. [Uneasily.] Oh, nothing. It will all come right. Let us hope so—eh?

Miss Tesman. Well, well, I daresay you two want to talk to each other. [Smiling.] And perhaps Hedda may have something to tell you too, George. Good-by! I must go home to Rina. [Turning at the door.] How strange it is to think that now Rina is with me and with my poor brother as well!

Tesman. Yes, fancy that, Aunt Julia! Eh?

[MISS TESMAN goes out by the hall door.]

Hedda. [Follows TESMAN coldly and searchingly with her eyes.] I almost believe your Aunt Rina's death affects you more than it does your Aunt Julia.

Tesman. Oh, it's not that alone. It's Eilert I am so terribly uneasy about.

Hedda. [Quickly.] Is there anything new about him?

Tesman. I looked in at his rooms this afternoon, intending to tell him the manuscript was in safe keeping.

Hedda. Well, did you not find him?

Tesman. No. He wasn't at home. But afterwards I met Mrs. Elvsted, and she told me that he had been here early this morning.

Hedda. Yes, directly after you had gone.

Tesman. And he said that he had torn his manuscript to pieces—eh?

Hedda. Yes, so he declared.

Tesman. Why, good heavens, he must have been completely out of his mind! And I suppose you thought it best not to give it back to him, Hedda?

Hedda. No, he did not get it.

Tesman. But of course you told him that we had it?

Hedda. No. [Quickly.] Did you tell Mrs. Elvsted?

Tesman. No; I thought I had better not. But you ought to have told him. Fancy, if, in desperation, he should go and do himself some injury! Let me have the manuscript, Hedda! I will take it to him at once. Where is it?

Hedda. [Cold and immovable, leaning on the arm-chair.] I have not got it.

Tesman. Have not got it? What in the world do you mean?

Hedda. I have burnt it—every line of it.

Tesman. [With a violent movement of terror.] Burnt! Burnt Eilert's manuscript!

Hedda. Don't scream so. The servant might hear you.

Tesman. Burnt! Why, good God——! No, no, no! It's impossible!

Hedda. It is so, nevertheless.

Tesman. Do you know what you have done, Hedda? It's unlawful appropriation of lost property. Fancy that! Just ask Judge Brack, and he'll tell you what it is.

Hedda. I advise you not to speak of it—either to Judge Brack, or to anyone else.

Tesman. But how could you do anything so unheard-of? What put it into your head? What possessed you? Answer me that—eh?

Hedda. [Suppressing an almost imperceptible smile.] I did it for your sake, George.

Tesman. For my sake!

Hedda. This morning, when you told me about what he had read to you——

Tesman. Yes, yes—what then?

Hedda. You acknowledged that you envied him his work.

Tesman. Oh, of course I didn't mean that literally.

Hedda. No matter—I could not bear the idea that anyone should throw you into the shade.

Tesman. [In an outburst of mingled doubt and joy.] Hedda! Oh, is this true? But—but—I never knew you to show your love like that before. Fancy that!

Hedda. Well, I may as well tell you that—just at this time—— [Impatiently, breaking off.] No, no; you can ask Aunt Julia. She will tell you, fast enough.

Tesman. Oh, I almost think I understand you, Hedda! [Clasps his hands together.] Great heavens! do you really mean it! Eh?

Hedda. Don't shout so. The servant might hear.

Tesman. [Laughing in irrepressible glee.] The servant! Why, how absurd you are, Hedda. It's only my old Berta! Why, I'll tell Berta myself.

Hedda. [Clenching her hands together in desperation.] Oh, it is killing me—it is killing me, all this!

Tesman. What is, Hedda? Eh?

Hedda. [Coldly, controlling herself.] All this—absurdity—George.

Tesman. Absurdity! Do you see anything absurd in my being overjoyed at the news! But after all—perhaps I had better not say anything to Berta.

Hedda. Oh—why not that too?

Tesman. No, no, not yet! But I must certainly tell Aunt Julia. And then that you have begun to call me George too! Fancy that! Oh, Aunt Julia will be so happy—so happy!

Hedda. When she hears that I have burnt Eilert Lövborg's manuscript—for your sake?

Tesman. No, by-the-bye—that affair of the manuscript—of course nobody must know about that. But that you love me so much,¹ Hedda—Aunt Julia must really share my joy in that! I wonder, now, whether this sort of thing is usual in young wives? Eh?

Hedda. I think you had better ask Aunt Julia that question too.

Tesman. I will indeed, some time or other. [Looks uneasy and downcast again.] And yet the manuscript—the manuscript! Good God! it is terrible to think what will become of poor Eilert now.

[MRS. ELVSTED, dressed as in the First

¹ Literally, "That you burn for me."

Act, with hat and cloak, enters by the hall door.]

Mrs. Elvsted. [Greets them hurriedly, and says in evident agitation.] Oh, dear Hedda, forgive my coming again.

Hedda. What is the matter with you, Thea?

Tesman. Something about Eilert Lövborg again—eh?

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes! I am dreadfully afraid some misfortune has happened to him.

Hedda. [Seizes her arm.] Ah—do you think so?

Tesman. Why, good Lord—what makes you think that, Mrs. Elvsted?

Mrs. Elvsted. I heard them talking of him at my boarding-house—just as I came in. Oh, the most incredible rumors are afloat about him today.

Tesman. Yes, fancy, so I heard too! And I can bear witness that he went straight home to bed last night. Fancy that!

Hedda. Well, what did they say at the boarding-house?

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh, I couldn't make out anything clearly. Either they knew nothing definite, or else—. They stopped talking when they saw me; and I did not dare to ask.

Tesman. [Moving about uneasily.] We must hope—we must hope that you misunderstood them, Mrs. Elvsted.

Mrs. Elvsted. No, no; I am sure it was of him they were talking. And I heard something about the hospital or—

Tesman. The hospital?

Hedda. No—surely that cannot be!

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh, I was in such mortal terror! I went to his lodgings and asked for him there.

Hedda. You could make up your mind to that, Thea!

Mrs. Elvsted. What else could I do? I really could bear the suspense no longer.

Tesman. But you didn't find him either—eh?

Mrs. Elvsted. No. And the people knew nothing about him. He hadn't been home since yesterday afternoon, they said.

Tesman. Yesterday. Fancy, how could they say that?

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh, I am sure something terrible must have happened to him.

Tesman. Hedda, dear—how would it be if I were to go and make inquiries—?

Hedda. No, no—don't you mix yourself up in this affair.

[JUDGE BRACK, with his hat in his hand, enters by the hall door, which BERTA opens, and closes behind him. He looks grave and bows in silence.]

Tesman. Oh, is that you, my dear Judge? Eh?

Brack. Yes. It was imperative I should see you this evening.

Tesman. I can see you have heard the news about Aunt Rina.

Brack. Yes, that among other things.

Tesman. Isn't it sad—eh?

Brack. Well, my dear Tesman, that depends on how you look at it.

Tesman. [Looks doubtfully at him.] Has anything else happened?

Brack. Yes.

Hedda. [In suspense.] Anything sad, Judge Brack?

Brack. That, too, depends on how you look at it, Mrs. Tesman.

Mrs. Elvsted. [Unable to restrain her anxiety.] Oh! it is something about Eilert Lövborg!

Brack. [With a glance at her.] What makes you think that, Madam? Perhaps you have already heard something—?

Mrs. Elvsted. [In confusion.] No, nothing at all, but—

Tesman. Oh, for heaven's sake, tell us!

Brack. [Shrugging his shoulders.] Well, I regret to say Eilert Lövborg has been taken to the hospital. He is lying at the point of death.

Mrs. Elvsted. [Shrieeks.] Oh God! oh God—!

Tesman. To the hospital! And at the point of death!

Hedda. [Involuntarily.] So soon then—

Mrs. Elvsted. [Wailing.] And we parted in anger, Hedda!

Hedda. [Whispers.] Thea—Thea—be careful!

Mrs. Elvsted. [Not heeding her.] I must go to him! I must see him alive!

Brack. It is useless, Madam. No one will be admitted.

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh, at least tell me what has happened to him. What is it?

Tesman. You don't mean to say that he has himself—. Eh?

Hedda. Yes, I am sure he has.

Tesman. Hedda, how can you—?

Brack. [Keeping his eyes fixed upon her.] Unfortunately you have guessed quite correctly, Mrs. Tesman.

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh, how horrible!

Tesman. Himself, then! Fancy that!

Hedda. Shot himself!

Brack. Rightly guessed again, Mrs. Tesman.

Mrs. Elvsted. [With an effort at self-control.] When did it happen, Mr. Brack?

Brack. This afternoon—between three and four.

Tesman. But, good Lord, where did he do it? Eh?

Brack. [*With some hesitation.*] Where? Well—I suppose at his lodgings.

Mrs. Elvsted. No, that cannot be; for I was there between six and seven.

Brack. Well then, somewhere else. I don't know exactly. I only know that he was found—. He had shot himself—in the breast.

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh, how terrible! That he should die like that!

Hedda. [*To BRACK.*] Was it in the breast?

Brack. Yes—as I told you.

Hedda. Not in the temple?

Brack. In the breast, Mrs. Tesman.

Hedda. Well, well—the breast is a good place, too.

Brack. How do you mean, Mrs. Tesman?

Hedda. [*Evasively.*] Oh, nothing—nothing.

Tesman. And the wound is dangerous, you say—eh?

Brack. Absolutely mortal. The end has probably come by this time.

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, yes, I feel it. The end! The end! Oh, Hedda—!

Tesman. But tell me, how have you learnt all this?

Brack. [*Curtly.*] Through one of the police. A man I had some business with.

Hedda. [*In a clear voice.*] At last a deed worth doing!

Tesman. [*Terrified.*] Good heavens, Hedda! what are you saying?

Hedda. I say there is beauty in this.

Brack. H'm, Mrs. Tesman—

Tesman. Beauty! Fancy that!

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh, Hedda, how can you talk of beauty in such an act!

Hedda. Eilert Lövborg has himself made up his account with life. He has had the courage to do—the one right thing.

Mrs. Elvsted. No, you must never think that was how it happened! It must have been in delirium that he did it.

Tesman. In despair!

Hedda. That he did not. I am certain of that.

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, yes! In delirium! Just as when he tore up our manuscript.

Brack. [*Starting.*] The manuscript? Has he torn that up?

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, last night.

Tesman. [*Whispers softly.*] Oh, Hedda, we shall never get over this.

Brack. H'm, very extraordinary.

Tesman. [*Moving about the room.*] To think of Eilert going out of the world in this way! And not leaving behind him the book that would have immortalized his name—

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh, if only it could be put together again!

Tesman. Yes, if it only could! I don't know what I would not give—

Mrs. Elvsted. Perhaps it can, Mr. Tesman.

Tesman. What do you mean?

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Searches in the pocket of her dress.*] Look here. I have kept all the loose notes he used to dictate from.

Hedda. [*A step forward.*] Ah—!

Tesman. You have kept them, Mrs. Elvsted! Eh?

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, I have them here. I put them in my pocket when I left home. Here they still are—

Tesman. Oh, do let me see them!

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Hands him a bundle of papers.*] But they are in such disorder—all mixed up.

Tesman. Fancy, if we could make something out of them, after all! Perhaps if we two put our heads together—

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh yes, at least let us try—

Tesman. We will manage it! We must! I will dedicate my life to this task.

Hedda. You, George? Your life?

Tesman. Yes, or rather all the time I can spare. My own collections must wait in the meantime. Hedda—you understand, eh? I owe this to Eilert's memory.

Hedda. Perhaps.

Tesman. And so, my dear Mrs. Elvsted, we will give our whole minds to it. There is no use in brooding over what can't be undone—eh? We must try to control our grief as much as possible, and—

Mrs. Elvsted. Yes, yes, Mr. Tesman, I will do the best I can.

Tesman. Well then, come here. I can't rest until we have looked through the notes. Where shall we sit? Here? No, in there, in the back room. Excuse me, my dear Judge. Come with me, Mrs. Elvsted.

Mrs. Elvsted. Oh, if only it were possible!

[TESMAN and MRS. ELVSTED go into the back room. She takes off her hat and cloak. They both sit at the table under the hanging lamp, and are soon deep in an eager examination of the papers. HEDDA crosses to the stove and sits in the arm-chair. Presently BRACK goes up to her.]

Hedda. [*In a low voice.*] Oh, what a sense of freedom it gives one, this act of Eilert Lövborg's.

Brack. Freedom, Mrs. Hedda? Well, of course, it is a release for him—

Hedda. I mean for me. It gives me a sense of freedom to know that a deed of deliberate courage is still possible in this world—a deed of spontaneous beauty.

Brack. [*Smiling.*] H'm—my dear Mrs. Hedda—

Hedda. Oh, I know what you are going to say. For you are a kind of specialist too, like—you know!

Brack. [*Looking hard at her.*] Eilert Lövborg was more to you than perhaps you are willing to admit to yourself. Am I wrong?

Hedda. I don't answer such questions. I only know that Eilert Lövborg has had the courage to live his life after his own fashion. And then—the last great act, with its beauty! Ah! that he should have the will and the strength to turn away from the banquet of life—so early.

Brack. I am sorry, Mrs. Hedda—but I fear I must dispel an amiable illusion.

Hedda. Illusion?

Brack. Which could not have lasted long in any case.

Hedda. What do you mean?

Brack. Eilert Lövborg did not shoot himself—voluntarily.

Hedda. Not voluntarily?

Brack. No. The thing did not happen exactly as I told it.

Hedda. [*In suspense.*] Have you concealed something? What is it?

Brack. For poor Mrs. Elvsted's sake I idealized the facts a little.

Hedda. What are the facts?

Brack. First, that he is already dead.

Hedda. At the hospital?

Brack. Yes—without regaining consciousness.

Hedda. What more have you concealed?

Brack. This—the event did not happen at his lodgings.

Hedda. Oh, that can make no difference.

Brack. Perhaps it may. For I must tell you—Eilert Lövborg was found shot in—in Mademoiselle Diana's boudoir.

Hedda. [*Makes a motion as if to rise, but sinks back again.*] That is impossible, Judge Brack! He cannot have been there again to-day.

Brack. He was there this afternoon. He went there, he said, to demand the return of something which they had taken from him. Talked wildly about a lost child—

Hedda. Ah—so that was why—

Brack. I thought probably he meant his manuscript; but now I hear he destroyed that

himself. So I suppose it must have been his pocket-book.

Hedda. Yes, no doubt. And there—there he was found?

Brack. Yes, there. With a pistol in his breast-pocket, discharged. The ball had lodged in a vital part.

Hedda. In the breast—yes.

Brack. No—in the bowels.

Hedda. [*Looks up at him with an expression of loathing.*] That too! Oh, what curse is it that makes everything I touch turn ludicrous and mean?

Brack. There is one point more, Mrs. Hedda—another disagreeable feature in the affair.

Hedda. And what is that?

Brack. The pistol he carried—

Hedda. [*Breathless.*] Well? What of it?

Brack. He must have stolen it.

Hedda. [*Leaps up.*] Stolen it? That is not true! He did not steal it!

Brack. No other explanation is possible. He must have stolen it—Hush!

[TESMAN AND MRS. ELVSTED have risen from the table in the back room, and come into the drawing-room.]

Tesman. [*With the papers in both his hands.*] Hedda, dear, it is almost impossible to see under that lamp. Think of that!

Hedda. Yes, I am thinking.

Tesman. Would you mind our sitting at your writing-table—eh?

Hedda. If you like. [*Quickly.*] No, wait! Let me clear it first!

Tesman. Oh, you needn't trouble, Hedda. There is plenty of room.

Hedda. No, no, let me clear it, I say! I will take these things in and put them on the piano. There!

[*She has drawn out an object, covered with sheet music, from under the book-case, places several other pieces of music upon it, and carries the whole into the inner room, to the left. TESMAN lays the scraps of paper on the writing-table, and moves the lamp there from the corner table. He and MRS. ELVSTED sit down and proceed with their work. HEDDA returns.*]

Hedda. [*Behind MRS. ELVSTED's chair, gently ruffling her hair.*] Well, my sweet Thea—how goes it with Eilert Lövborg's monument?

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Looks dispiritedly up at her.*] Oh, it will be terribly hard to put in order.

Tesman. We must manage it. I am determined. And arranging other people's papers is just the work for me.

[HEDDA goes over to the stove, and seats herself on one of the footstools. BRACK stands over her, leaning on the arm-chair.]

Hedda. [Whispers.] What did you say about the pistol?

Brack. [Softly.] That he must have stolen it.

Hedda. Why stolen it?

Brack. Because every other explanation ought to be impossible, Mrs. Hedda.

Hedda. Indeed?

Brack. [Glances at her.] Of course Eilert Lövborg was here this morning. Was he not?

Hedda. Yes.

Brack. Were you alone with him?

Hedda. Part of the time.

Brack. Did you not leave the room whilst he was here?

Hedda. No.

Brack. Try to recollect. Were you not out of the room a moment?

Hedda. Yes, perhaps just a moment—out in the hall.

Brack. And where was your pistol-case during that time?

Hedda. I had it locked up in—

Brack. Well, Mrs. Hedda?

Hedda. The case stood there on the writing-table.

Brack. Have you looked since, to see whether both the pistols are there?

Hedda. No.

Brack. Well, you need not. I saw the pistol found in Lövborg's pocket, and I knew it at once as the one I had seen yesterday—and before, too.

Hedda. Have you it with you?

Brack. No; the police have it.

Hedda. What will the police do with it?

Brack. Search till they find the owner.

Hedda. Do you think they will succeed?

Brack. [Bends over her and whispers.] No, Hedda Gabler—not so long as I say nothing.

Hedda. [Looks frightened at him.] And if you do not say nothing—what then?

Brack. [Shrugs his shoulders.] There is always the possibility that the pistol was stolen.

Hedda. [Firmly.] Death rather than that.

Brack. [Smiling.] People say such things—but they don't do them.

Hedda. [Without replying.] And supposing the pistol was not stolen, and the owner is discovered? What then?

Brack. Well, Hedda—then comes the scandal.

Hedda. The scandal!

Brack. Yes, the scandal—of which you are so mortally afraid. You will, of course, be brought before the court—both you and Mademoiselle Diana. She will have to explain how the thing happened—whether it was an accidental shot or murder. Did the pistol go off as he was trying to take it out of his pocket, to threaten her with? Or did she tear the pistol out of his hand, shoot him, and push it back into his pocket? That would be quite like her; for she is an able-bodied young person, this same Mademoiselle Diana.

Hedda. But I have nothing to do with all this repulsive business.

Brack. No. But you will have to answer the question: Why did you give Eilert Lövborg the pistol? And what conclusions will people draw from the fact that you did give it to him?

Hedda. [Lets her head sink.] That is true. I did not think of that.

Brack. Well, fortunately, there is no danger, so long as I say nothing.

Hedda. [Looks up at him.] So I am in your power, Judge Brack. You have me at your beck and call, from this time forward.

Brack. [Whispers softly.] Dearest Hedda—believe me—I shall not abuse my advantage.

Hedda. I am in your power none the less. Subject to your will and your demands. A slave, a slave then! [Rises impetuously.] No, I cannot endure the thought of that! Never!

Brack. [Looks half-mockingly at her.] People generally get used to the inevitable.

Hedda. [Returns his look.] Yes, perhaps. [She crosses to the writing-table. Suppressing an involuntary smile, she imitates TESMAN's intonations.] Well? Are you getting on, George? Eh?

Tesman. Heaven knows, dear. In any case it will be the work of months.

Hedda. [As before.] Fancy that! [Passes her hands softly through MRS. ELVSTED's hair.] Doesn't it seem strange to you, Thea? Here are you sitting with Tesman—just as you used to sit with Eilert Lövborg.

Mrs. Elvsted. Ah, if I could only inspire your husband in the same way!

Hedda. Oh, that will come too—in time.

Tesman. Yes, do you know, Hedda—I really think I begin to feel something of the sort. But won't you go and sit with Brack again?

Hedda. Is there nothing I can do to help you two?

Tesman. No, nothing in the world. [Turn-

ing his head.] I trust to you to keep Hedda company, my dear Brack.

Brack. [*With a glance at HEDDA.*] With the very greatest of pleasure.

Hedda. Thanks. But I am tired this evening. I will go in and lie down a little on the sofa.

Tesman. Yes, do, dear—eh?

[*HEDDA goes into the back room and draws the curtains. A short pause. Suddenly she is heard playing a wild dance on the piano.*]

Mrs. Elvsted. [*Starts from her chair.*] Oh—what is that?

Tesman. [*Runs to the doorway.*] Why, my dearest Hedda—don't play dance-music tonight! Just think of Aunt Rina! And of Eilert too!

Hedda. [*Puts her head out between the curtains.*] And of Aunt Julia. And of all the rest of them.—After this, I will be quiet.

[*Closes the curtains again.*]

Tesman. [*At the writing-table.*] It's not good for her to see us at this distressing work. I'll tell you what, Mrs. Elvsted—you shall take the empty room at Aunt Julia's, and then I will come over in the evenings, and we can sit and work *there*—eh?

Hedda. [*In the inner room.*] I hear what

you are saying, Tesman. But how am *I* to get through the evenings out here?

Tesman. [*Turning over the papers.*] Oh, I daresay Judge Brack will be so kind as to look in now and then, even though I am out.

Brack. [*In the arm-chair, calls out gaily.*] Every blessed evening, with all the pleasure in life, Mrs. Tesman! We shall get on capitally together, we two!

Hedda. [*Speaking loud and clear.*] Yes, don't you flatter yourself we will, Judge Brack? Now that you are the one cock in the basket——

[*A shot is heard within. TESMAN, MRS.*

ELVSTED, and BRACK leap to their feet.]

Tesman. Oh, now she is playing with those pistols again.

[*He throws back the curtains and runs in, followed by MRS. ELVSTED. HEDDA lies stretched on the sofa, lifeless. Confusion and cries. BERTA enters in alarm from the right.*]

Tesman. [*Shrieks to BRACK.*] Shot herself! Shot herself in the temple! Fancy that!

Brack. [*Half-fainting in the arm-chair.*] Good God!—people don't do such things!

CURTAIN

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

By
OSCAR WILDE

BEYOND DOUBT, THE THREE FORCES which revived the drama and made it "modern" were, first, Ibsenism, or the intellectual integrity and energy brought to the theatre by the Ibsen plays; second, naturalism, or the scientific imitation by playwrights of the surfaces of observed reality, which made earlier plays too often seem merely entertaining artificiality; and third, the Free Theatre movement, or the dedication by both theatre-workers and audiences to art independent of commerce. These three forces made the mainstream of progressive drama from the rise of Ibsenism and naturalism in the 1870's and the rapid spread of the Free Theatre movement following Antoine's in 1887. But great plays could appear outside the mainstream, and did. One such is Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1897), and another is certainly Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

Probably no masterpiece was ever more casually achieved or catastrophically accompanied than *The Importance of Being Earnest*. It was written in three weeks, apparently very easily, at Worthing, which supplied the name of a character, for George Alexander, the actor-manager who had put himself in the forefront of the 1890's brand of British dramatic modernity by producing Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* in 1893. He had earlier produced Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*. When Wilde had delivered *The Importance of Being Earnest* in four acts, and Alexander had had it reduced to three, Wilde became bothered by doubts. He thought Alexander was too romantic an actor for the part of Worthing, and the whole play too insubstantial for the company Alexander had gathered, even if—and Wilde showed no doubts of this—the play won popular success. So Wilde dashed off the scenario of another play, one more in the pattern of *Lady Windermere's Fan*, and promised Alexander to complete it after the run of *The Importance*. But when *The Im-*

portance had finished its run, Oscar Wilde was in prison; his name had been erased from programs and billboards, and he clearly could never again appear before the British public as a playwright. Even the scenario he had given Alexander was used five years later by another writer without immediate acknowledgment to him.

A reporter asked Wilde before the first night if he thought *The Importance of Being Earnest* would be as successful as his earlier plays. Wilde answered, "The play is a success. The only question is whether the audience will be a success." The first-night and later audiences were delighted with the play, and it is to this day as alive in the theatre as any play of its day, even though the 1890's was a decade unusually productive of lasting plays, and even though it demands a very high quality of acting. Essential, of course, is the utmost gravity and seriousness among the cast. They must behave as though all they do and say is not merely natural but ordinary and reasonable. They will find then that Wilde has provided them both with plot to direct their action and character to create their interaction. Lady Bracknell, in particular, is a character rich in acting possibilities and in audience impact in every scene in which she appears. She epitomizes the never-recurring climate of culture which made the play possible: she is the perfectly secure personage in a perfectly secure society, immune to loss of any kind, adequate to any emergency. The play may be much more easily regarded as the wish-fulfillment of Victorian society at its ripest and most assured than as satire upon it, though some critics detect satire. But neither those who believe Wilde admired his society or those who think he despised it will agree that the play is merely nonsense. It is like no other farce: it does not use slapstick, violence, excessive rapidity, or bawdiness, but it has to be called farce because it imposes on its audiences an il-

lusion so fantastic that it leaves mere comedy on the earth while it flies off to its own region.

The original production took place in February 1895. The play has been repeatedly revived in both Britain and the United

States. Distinguished actors and actresses have appeared in its leading roles in the commercial theatre, and it is still a favorite choice for production in the academic and local theatres.

OSCAR WILDE

Born 1854, Dublin, Ireland.

Educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and Magdalen College, Oxford.

1878, Won double first honors in Classical Moderations and *Literae Humaniores* and Newdigate Prize for Poetry at Oxford.

1884, Married. Two sons.

1895, Sentenced to two years' imprisonment for sexual perversion.

1900, Died in Paris.

Writer of fiction, poetry, and criticism.

PLAYS

1880 *Vera, or The Nihilists*. 1883 *The Duchess of Padua*. 1892 *Lady Windermere's Fan*. 1893 *Salomé* (one act; written in French, translated by various persons, not including the author). 1893 *A Woman of No Importance*. 1895 *An Ideal Husband*. 1895 *The Importance of Being Earnest*. 1906 *A Florentine Tragedy* (incomplete). 1908 *La Sainte Courtisane* (incomplete, written in English). 1922 *For Love of the King*, a Burmese Masque.

WRITINGS ON DRAMA

"The Truth of Masks," in *Intentions*, 1891, and random comment elsewhere in that volume. "Shakespeare on Scenery" (1885), "*Henry the Fourth* at Oxford" (1885), "*The Cenci*" (1886), "Ben Jonson" (1886), reprinted in volume 12 of Patrons' edition of *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, 1923.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

The Persons of the Play

JOHN WORTHING, J. P.
ALGERNON MONCRIEFF.
REV. CANON CHASUBLE, D.D.
MERRIMAN, *Butler*.
LANE, *Manservant*.
LADY BRACKNELL.
HON. GWENDOLEN FAIRFAX.
CECILY CARDEW.
MISS PRISM, *Governess*.

THE SCENES OF THE PLAY

ACT I. *Algernon Moncrieff's Flat in Half-Moon Street, W.*
ACT II. *The Garden at the Manor House, Woolton.*
ACT III. *Drawing-room at the Manor House, Woolton.*
TIME. *The Present.*

FIRST ACT

Morning-room in ALGERNON'S flat in Half-Moon Street. The room is luxuriously and artistically furnished. The sound of a piano is heard in the adjoining room. [LANE is arranging afternoon tea on the table, and after the music has ceased, ALGERNON enters.]

Algernon. Did you hear what I was playing, Lane?¹

Lane. I didn't think it polite to listen, sir.
Algernon. I'm sorry for that, for your sake. I don't play accurately—any one can play accurately—but I play with wonderful expression. As far as the piano is concerned, sentiment is my forte. I keep science for Life.

Lane. Yes, sir.

Algernon. And, speaking of the science of Life, have you got the cucumber sandwiches cut for Lady Bracknell?

Lane. Yes, sir. [*Hands them on a salver.*]

Algernon. [*Inspects them, takes two, and sits down on the sofa.*] Oh! . . . by the way, Lane, I see from your book that on Thursday night, when Lord Shoreman and Mr.² Worthing were dining with me, eight bottles of champagne are entered as having been consumed.

Lane. Yes, sir; eight bottles and a pint.

Algernon. Why is it that at a bachelor's establishment the servants invariably drink

the champagne? I ask merely for information.

Lane. I attribute it to the superior quality of the wine, sir. I have often observed that in married households the champagne is rarely of a first-rate brand.

Algernon. Good heavens! Is marriage so demoralizing as that?

Lane. I believe it is a very pleasant state, sir. I have had very little experience of it myself up to the present. I have only been married once. That was in consequence of a misunderstanding between myself and a young person.

Algernon. [*Languidly.*] I don't know that I am much interested in your family life, Lane.

Lane. No, sir; it is not a very interesting subject. I never think of it myself.

Algernon. Very natural, I am sure. That will do, Lane, thank you.

Lane. Thank you, sir. [*Goes out.*]

Algernon. Lane's views on marriage seem somewhat lax. Really, if the lower orders don't set us a good example, what on earth is the use of them? They seem, as a class, to have absolutely no sense of moral responsibility. [*Enter LANE.*]

Lane. Mr Ernest Worthing.

[*Enter JACK. LANE goes out.*]

Algernon. How are you, my dear Ernest? What brings you up to town?

Jack. Oh, pleasure, pleasure! What else should bring one anywhere? Eating as usual, I see, Algy!

Algernon. [*Stiffly.*] I believe it is cus-

¹ Lane was named for John Lane, Wilde's publisher, whom Wilde disliked.

² This play follows such British spelling as "Mr", "Dr", "candour."

tomary in good society to take some slight refreshment at five o'clock. Where have you been since last Thursday?

Jack. [Sitting down on the sofa.] In the country.

Algernon. What on earth do you do there?

Jack. [Pulling off his gloves.] When one is in town one amuses oneself. When one is in the country one amuses other people. It is excessively boring.

Algernon. And who are the people you amuse?

Jack. [Airily.] Oh, neighbours, neighbours.

Algernon. Got nice neighbours in your part of Shropshire?

Jack. Perfectly horrid! Never speak to one of them.

Algernon. How immensely you must amuse them! [Goes over and takes sandwich.] By the way, Shropshire is your county, is it not?

Jack. Eh? Shropshire? Yes, of course. Hallo! Why all these cups? Why cucumber sandwiches? Why such reckless extravagance in one so young? Who is coming to tea?

Algernon. Oh! merely Aunt Augusta and Gwendolen.

Jack. How perfectly delightful!

Algernon. Yes, that is all very well; but I am afraid Aunt Augusta won't quite approve of your being here.

Jack. May I ask why?

Algernon. My dear fellow, the way you flirt with Gwendolen is perfectly disgraceful. It is almost as bad as the way Gwendolen flirts with you.

Jack. I am in love with Gwendolen. I have come up to town expressly to propose to her.

Algernon. I thought you had come up for pleasure? . . . I call that business.

Jack. How utterly unromantic you are! *Algernon.* I really don't see anything romantic in proposing. It is very romantic to be in love. But there is nothing romantic about a definite proposal. Why, one may be accepted. One usually is, I believe. Then the excitement is all over. The very essence of romance is uncertainty. If ever I get married, I'll certainly try to forget the fact.

Jack. I have no doubt about that, dear Algy. The Divorce Court was specially invented for people whose memories are so curiously constituted.

Algernon. Oh! there is no use speculating on that subject. Divorces are made in Heaven— [Jack puts out his hand to take a sandwich. ALGERNON at once interferes.]

Please don't touch the cucumber sandwiches. They are ordered specially for Aunt Augusta. [Takes one and eats it.]

Jack. Well, you have been eating them all the time.

Algernon. That is quite a different matter. She is my aunt. [Takes plate from below.] Have some bread and butter. The bread and butter is for Gwendolen. Gwendolen is devoted to bread and butter.

Jack. [Advancing to table and helping himself.] And very good bread and butter it is too.

Algernon. Well, my dear fellow, you need not eat as if you were going to eat it all. You behave as if you were married to her already. You are not married to her already, and I don't think you ever will be.

Jack. Why on earth do you say that?

Algernon. Well, in the first place, girls never marry the men they flirt with. Girls don't think it right.

Jack. Oh, that is nonsense!

Algernon. It isn't. It is a great truth. It accounts for the extraordinary number of bachelors that one sees all over the place. In the second place, I don't give my consent.

Jack. Your consent!

Algernon. My dear fellow, Gwendolen is my first cousin. And before I allow you to marry her, you will have to clear up the whole question of Cecily. [Rings bell.]

Jack. Cecily! What on earth do you mean? What do you mean, Algy, by Cecily? I don't know any one of the name of Cecily.

[Enter LANE.]

Algernon. Bring me that cigarette case Mr Worthing left in the smoking-room the last time he dined here.

Lane. Yes, sir. [Goes out.]

Jack. Do you mean to say you have had my cigarette case all this time? I wish to goodness you had let me know. I have been writing frantic letters to Scotland Yard about it. I was very nearly offering a large reward.

Algernon. Well, I wish you would offer one. I happen to be more than usually hard up.

Jack. There is no good offering a large reward now that the thing is found.

[Enter LANE with the cigarette case on a salver. ALGERNON takes it at once. LANE goes out.]

Algernon. I think that is rather mean of you, Ernest, I must say. [Opens case and examines it.] However, it makes no matter, for, now that I look at the inscription inside, I find that the thing isn't yours after all.

Jack. Of course it's mine. [Moving to him.] You have seen me with it a hundred

times, and you have no right whatsoever to read what is written inside. It is a very ungentlemanly thing to read a private cigarette case.

Algernon. Oh! it is absurd to have a hard and fast rule about what one should read and what one shouldn't. More than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn't read.

Jack. I am quite aware of the fact, and I don't propose to discuss modern culture. It isn't the sort of thing one should talk of in private. I simply want my cigarette case back.

Algernon. Yes; but this isn't your cigarette case. This cigarette case is a present from someone of the name of Cecily, and you said you didn't know anyone of that name.

Jack. Well, if you want to know, Cecily happens to be my aunt.

Algernon. Your aunt!

Jack. Yes. Charming old lady she is, too. Lives at Tunbridge Wells. Just give it back to me, Algy.

Algernon. [*Retreating to back of sofa.*] But why does she call herself little Cecily if she is your aunt and lives at Tunbridge Wells? [*Reading.*] 'From little Cecily with her fondest love.'

Jack. [*Moving to sofa and kneeling upon it.*] My dear fellow, what on earth is there in that? Some aunts are tall, some aunts are not tall. That is a matter that surely an aunt may be allowed to decide for herself. You seem to think that every aunt should be exactly like your aunt! That is absurd. For Heaven's sake give me back my cigarette case. [*Follows ALGERNON round the room.*]

Algernon. Yes. But why does your aunt call you her uncle? 'From little Cecily, with her fondest love to her dear Uncle Jack.' There is no objection, I admit, to an aunt being a small aunt, but why an aunt, no matter what her size may be, should call her own nephew her uncle, I can't quite make out. Besides, your name isn't Jack at all; it is Ernest.

Jack. It isn't Ernest; it's Jack.

Algernon. You have always told me it was Ernest. I have introduced you to every one as Ernest. You answer to the name of Ernest. You look as if your name was Ernest. You are the most earnest-looking person I ever saw in my life. It is perfectly absurd your saying that your name isn't Ernest. It's on your cards. Here is one of them. [*Taking it from case.*] 'Mr Ernest Worthing, B.4, The Albany.' I'll keep this as a proof that your name is Ernest if ever

you attempt to deny it to me, or to Gwendolen, or to any one else.

[*Puts the card in his pocket.*]

Jack. Well, my name is Ernest in town and Jack in the country, and the cigarette case was given to me in the country.

Algernon. Yes, but that does not account for the fact that your small Aunt Cecily, who lives at Tunbridge Wells, calls you her dear uncle. Come, old boy, you had much better have the thing out at once.

Jack. My dear Algy, you talk exactly as if you were a dentist. It is very vulgar to talk like a dentist when one isn't a dentist. It produces a false impression.

Algernon. Well, that is exactly what dentists always do. Now, go on! Tell me the whole thing. I may mention that I have always suspected you of being a confirmed and secret Bunburyist; and I am quite sure of it now.

Jack. Bunburyist? What on earth do you mean by a Bunburyist?

Algernon. I'll reveal to you the meaning of that incomparable expression as soon as you are kind enough to inform me why you are Ernest in town and Jack in the country.

Jack. Well, produce my cigarette case first.

Algernon. Here it is. [*Hands cigarette case.*] Now produce your explanation, and pray make it improbable. [*Sits on sofa.*]

Jack. My dear fellow, there is nothing improbable about my explanation at all. In fact it's perfectly ordinary. Old Mr Thomas Cardew, who adopted me when I was a little boy, made me in his will guardian to his granddaughter, Miss Cecily Cardew. Cecily, who addresses me as her uncle from motives of respect that you could not possibly appreciate, lives at my place in the country under the charge of her admirable governess, Miss Prism.

Algernon. Where is that place in the country, by the way?

Jack. That is nothing to you, dear boy. You are not going to be invited. . . . I may tell you candidly that the place is not in Shropshire.

Algernon. I suspected that, my dear fellow! I have Bunbured all over Shropshire on two separate occasions. Now, go on. Why are you Ernest in town and Jack in the country?

Jack. My dear Algy, I don't know whether you will be able to understand my real motives. You are hardly serious enough. When one is placed in the position of guardian, one has to adopt a very high moral tone on all subjects. It's one's duty to do so. And as

a high moral tone can hardly be said to conduce very much to either one's health or one's happiness, in order to get up to town I have always pretended to have a younger brother of the name of Ernest, who lives in the Albany, and gets into the most dreadful scrapes. That, my dear Algy, is the whole truth pure and simple.

Algernon. The truth is rarely pure and never simple. Modern life would be very tedious if it were either, and modern literature a complete impossibility!

Jack. That wouldn't be at all a bad thing.

Algernon. Literary criticism is not your forte, my dear fellow. Don't try it. You should leave that to people who haven't been at a University. They do it so well in the daily papers. What you really are is a Bunburyist. I was quite right in saying you were a Bunburyist. You are one of the most advanced Bunburyists I know.

Jack. What on earth do you mean?

Algernon. You have invented a very useful younger brother called Ernest, in order that you may be able to come up to town as often as you like. I have invented an invaluable permanent invalid called Bunbury, in order that I may be able to go down into the country whenever I choose. Bunbury is perfectly invaluable. If it wasn't for Bunbury's extraordinary bad health, for instance, I wouldn't be able to dine with you at Willis's to-night, for I have been really engaged to Aunt Augusta for more than a week.

Jack. I haven't asked you to dine with me anywhere to-night.

Algernon. I know. You are absurdly careless about sending out invitations. It is very foolish of you. Nothing annoys people so much as not receiving invitations.

Jack. You had much better dine with your Aunt Augusta.

Algernon. I haven't the smallest intention of doing anything of the kind. To begin with, I dined there on Monday, and once a week is quite enough to dine with one's own relations. In the second place, whenever I do dine there I am always treated as a member of the family, and sent down with either no woman at all, or two. In the third place, I know perfectly well whom she will place me next to, to-night. She will place me next Mary Farquhar, who always flirts with her own husband across the dinner-table. That is not very pleasant. Indeed, it is not even decent . . . and that sort of thing is enormously on the increase. The amount of women in London who flirt with their own husbands is perfectly scandalous. It looks so bad. It is simply washing one's clean linen

in public. Besides, now that I know you to be a confirmed Bunburyist I naturally want to talk to you about Bunburying. I want to tell you the rules.

Jack. I'm not a Bunburyist at all. If Gwendolen accepts me, I am going to kill my brother; indeed I think I'll kill him in any case. Cecily is a little too much interested in him. It is rather a bore. So I am going to get rid of Ernest. And I strongly advise you to do the same with Mr . . . with your invalid friend who has the absurd name.

Algernon. Nothing will induce me to part with Bunbury, and if you ever get married, which seems to me extremely problematic, you will be very glad to know Bunbury. A man who marries without knowing Bunbury has a very tedious time of it.

Jack. That is nonsense. If I marry a charming girl like Gwendolen, and she is the only girl I ever saw in my life that I would marry, I certainly won't want to know Bunbury.

Algernon. Then your wife will. You don't seem to realize that in married life three is company and two is none.

Jack. [*Sententiously.*] That, my dear young friend, is the theory that the corrupt French Drama has been propounding for the last fifty years.

Algernon. Yes; and that the happy English home has proved in half the time.

Jack. For heaven's sake, don't try to be cynical. It's perfectly easy to be cynical.

Algernon. My dear fellow, it isn't easy to be anything nowadays. There's such a lot of beastly competition about. [*The sound of an electric bell is heard.*] Ah! that must be Aunt Augusta. Only relatives, or creditors, ever ring in that Wagnerian manner. Now, if I get her out of the way for ten minutes, so that you can have an opportunity for proposing to Gwendolen, may I dine with you to-night at Willis's?

Jack. I suppose so, if you want to.

Algernon. Yes, but you must be serious about it. I hate people who are not serious about meals. It is so shallow of them.

[*Enter LANE.*]

Lane. Lady Bracknell and Miss Fairfax.

[*ALGERNON goes forward to meet them.*]

Enter LADY BRACKNELL and GWENDOLEN.]

Lady Bracknell. Good afternoon, dear Algernon. I hope you are behaving very well.

Algernon. I'm feeling very well, Aunt Augusta.

Lady Bracknell. That's not quite the same

thing. In fact the two things rarely go together.

[Sees JACK and bows to him with icy coldness.]

Algernon. [To GWENDOLEN.] Dear me, you are smart!

Gwendolen. I am always smart! Am I not, Mr Worthing?

Jack. You're quite perfect, Miss Fairfax.

Gwendolen. Oh! I hope I am not that. It would leave no room for developments, and I intend to develop in many directions.

[GWENDOLEN and JACK sit down together in the corner.]

Lady Bracknell. I'm sorry if we are a little late, Algernon, but I was obliged to call on dear Lady Harbury. I hadn't been there since her poor husband's death. I never saw a woman so altered; she looks quite twenty years younger. And now I'll have a cup of tea, and one of those nice cucumber sandwiches you promised me.

Algernon. Certainly, Aunt Augusta.

[Goes over to tea-table.]

Lady Bracknell. Won't you come and sit here, Gwendolen?

Gwendolen. Thanks, mamma, I'm quite comfortable where I am.

Algernon. [Picking up empty plate in horror.] Good heavens! Lane! Why are there no cucumber sandwiches? I ordered them specially.

Lane. [Gravely.] There were no cucumbers in the market this morning, sir. I went down twice.

Algernon. No cucumbers!

Lane. No, sir. Not even for ready money.

Algernon. That will do, Lane, thank you.

Lane. Thank you, sir. [Goes out.]

Algernon. I am greatly distressed, Aunt Augusta, about there being no cucumbers, not even for ready money.

Lady Bracknell. It really makes no matter, Algernon. I had some crumpets with Lady Harbury, who seems to me to be living entirely for pleasure now.

Algernon. I hear her hair has turned quite gold from grief.

Lady Bracknell. It certainly has changed its colour. From what cause I, of course, cannot say. [ALGERNON crosses and hands tea.] Thank you. I've quite a treat for you to-night, Algernon. I am going to send you down with Mary Farquhar. She is such a nice woman, and so attentive to her husband. It's delightful to watch them.

Algernon. I am afraid, Aunt Augusta, I shall have to give up the pleasure of dining with you to-night after all.

Lady Bracknell. [Frowning.] I hope not, Algernon. It would put my table completely out. Your uncle would have to dine upstairs. Fortunately he is accustomed to that.

Algernon. It is a great bore, and, I need hardly say, a terrible disappointment to me, but the fact is I have just had a telegram to say that my poor friend Bunbury is very ill again. [Exchanges glances with JACK.] They seem to think I should be with him.

Lady Bracknell. It is very strange. This Mr Bunbury seems to suffer from curiously bad health.

Algernon. Yes; poor Bunbury is a dreadful invalid.

Lady Bracknell. Well, I must say, Algernon, that I think it is high time that Mr Bunbury made up his mind whether he was going to live or to die. This shilly-shallying with the question is absurd. Nor do I in any way approve of the modern sympathy with invalids. I consider it morbid. Illness of any kind is hardly a thing to be encouraged in others. Health is the primary duty of life. I am always telling that to your poor uncle, but he never seems to take much notice . . . as far as any improvement in his ailment goes. I should be much obliged if you would ask Mr Bunbury, from me, to be kind enough not to have a relapse on Saturday, for I rely on you to arrange my music for me. It is my last reception, and one wants something that will encourage conversation, particularly at the end of the season when every one has practically said whatever they had to say, which, in most cases, was probably not much.

Algernon. I'll speak to Bunbury, Aunt Augusta, if he is still conscious, and I think I can promise you he'll be all right by Saturday. Of course the music is a great difficulty. You see, if one plays good music, people don't listen, and if one plays bad music people don't talk. But I'll run over the programme I've drawn out, if you will kindly come into the next room for a moment.

Lady Bracknell. Thank you, Algernon. It is very thoughtful of you. [Rising, and following ALGERNON.] I'm sure the programme will be delightful, after a few expurgations. French songs I cannot possibly allow. People always seem to think that they are improper, and either look shocked, which is vulgar, or laugh, which is worse. But German sounds a thoroughly respectable language, and, indeed, I believe is so. Gwendolen, you will accompany me.

Gwendolen. Certainly, mamma.

[LADY BRACKNELL and ALGERNON go into the music-room, GWENDOLEN remains behind.]

Jack. Charming day it has been, Miss Fairfax.

Gwendolen. Pray don't talk to me about the weather, Mr Worthing. Whenever people talk to me about the weather, I always feel quite certain that they mean something else. And that makes me so nervous.

Jack. I do mean something else.

Gwendolen. I thought so. In fact, I am never wrong.

Jack. And I would like to be allowed to take advantage of Lady Bracknell's temporary absence. . . .

Gwendolen. I would certainly advise you to do so. Mamma has a way of coming back suddenly into a room that I have often had to speak to her about.

Jack. [*Nervously.*] Miss Fairfax, ever since I met you I have admired you more than any girl . . . I have ever met since . . . I met you.

Gwendolen. Yes, I am quite well aware of the fact. And I often wish that in public, at any rate, you had been more demonstrative. For me you have always had an irresistible fascination. Even before I met you I was far from indifferent to you. [*Jack looks at her in amazement.*] We live, as I hope you know, Mr Worthing, in an age of ideals. The fact is constantly mentioned in the more expensive monthly magazines, and has reached the provincial pulpits, I am told; and my ideal has always been to love some one of the name of Ernest. There is something in that name that inspires absolute confidence. The moment Algernon first mentioned to me that he had a friend called Ernest, I knew I was destined to love you.

Jack. You really love me, Gwendolen?

Gwendolen. Passionately!

Jack. Darling! You don't know how happy you've made me.

Gwendolen. My own Ernest!

Jack. But you don't really mean to say that you couldn't love me if my name wasn't Ernest?

Gwendolen. But your name is Ernest.

Jack. Yes, I know it is. But supposing it was something else? Do you mean to say you couldn't love me then?

Gwendolen. [*Glibly.*] Ah! that is clearly a metaphysical speculation, and like most metaphysical speculations has very little reference at all to the actual facts of real life, as we know them.

Jack. Personally, darling, to speak quite candidly, I don't much care about the name of Ernest. . . . I don't think the name suits me at all.

Gwendolen. It suits you perfectly. It is a

divine name. It has music of its own. It produces vibrations.

Jack. Well, really, Gwendolen, I must say that I think there are lots of other much nicer names. I think Jack, for instance, a charming name.

Gwendolen. Jack? . . . No, there is very little music in the name Jack, if any at all, indeed. It does not thrill. It produces absolutely no vibrations. . . . I have known several Jacks, and they all, without exception, were more than usually plain. Besides, Jack is a notorious domesticity for John! And I pity any woman who is married to a man called John. She would probably never be allowed to know the entrancing pleasure of a single moment's solitude. The only really safe name is Ernest.

Jack. Gwendolen, I must get christened at once—I mean we must get married at once. There is no time to be lost.

Gwendolen. Married, Mr Worthing?

Jack. [*Astounded.*] Well . . . surely. You know that I love you, and you led me to believe, Miss Fairfax, that you were not absolutely indifferent to me.

Gwendolen. I adore you. But you haven't proposed to me yet. Nothing has been said at all about marriage. The subject has not even been touched on.

Jack. Well . . . may I propose to you now?

Gwendolen. I think it would be an admirable opportunity. And to spare you any possible disappointment, Mr Worthing, I think it only fair to tell you quite frankly beforehand that I am fully determined to accept you.

Jack. Gwendolen!

Gwendolen. Yes, Mr Worthing, what have you got to say to me?

Jack. You know what I have got to say to you.

Gwendolen. Yes, but you don't say it.

Jack. Gwendolen, will you marry me?

[*Goes on his knees.*]

Gwendolen. Of course I will, darling. How long you have been about it! I am afraid you have had very little experience in how to propose.

Jack. My own one, I have never loved any one in the world but you.

Gwendolen. Yes, but men often propose for practice. I know my brother Gerald does. All my girl-friends tell me so. What wonderfully blue eyes you have, Ernest! They are quite, quite blue. I hope you will always look at me just like that, especially when there are other people present.

[*Enter LADY BRACKNELL.*]

Lady Bracknell. Mr Worthing! Rise, sir,

from this semi-recumbent posture. It is most indecorous.

Gwendolen. Mamma! [*He tries to rise; she restrains him.*] I must beg you to retire. This is no place for you. Besides, Mr Worthing has not quite finished yet.

Lady Bracknell. Finished what, may I ask?

Gwendolen. I am engaged to Mr Worthing, mamma. [*They rise together.*]

Lady Bracknell. Pardon me, you are not engaged to any one. When you do become engaged to some one, I, or your father, should his health permit him, will inform you of the fact. An engagement should come on a young girl as a surprise, pleasant or unpleasant, as the case may be. It is hardly a matter that she could be allowed to arrange for herself. . . . And now I have a few questions to put to you, Mr Worthing. While I am making these inquiries, you, Gwendolen, will wait for me below in the carriage.

Gwendolen. [*Reproachfully.*] Mamma!

Lady Bracknell. In the carriage, Gwendolen! [*GWENDOLEN goes to the door. She and JACK blow kisses to each other behind LADY BRACKNELL'S back. LADY BRACKNELL looks vaguely about as if she could not understand what the noise was. Finally turns round.*] Gwendolen, the carriage!

Gwendolen. Yes, mamma.

[*Goes out, looking back at JACK.*]

Lady Bracknell. [*Sitting down.*] You can take a seat, Mr Worthing.

[*Looks in her pocket for note-book and pencil.*]

Jack. Thank you, Lady Bracknell, I prefer standing.

Lady Bracknell. [*Pencil and note-book in hand.*] I feel bound to tell you that you are not down on my list of eligible young men, although I have the same list as the dear Duchess of Bolton has. We work together, in fact. However, I am quite ready to enter your name, should your answers be what a really affectionate mother requires. Do you smoke?

Jack. Well, yes, I must admit I smoke.

Lady Bracknell. I am glad to hear it. A man should always have an occupation of some kind. There are far too many idle men in London as it is. How old are you?

Jack. Twenty-nine.

Lady Bracknell. A very good age to be married at. I have always been of opinion that a man who desires to get married should know either everything or nothing. Which do you know?

Jack. [*After some hesitation.*] I know nothing, Lady Bracknell.

Lady Bracknell. I am pleased to hear it.

I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square. What is your income?

Jack. Between seven and eight thousand a year.

Lady Bracknell. [*Makes a note in her book.*] In land, or in investments?

Jack. In investments, chiefly.

Lady Bracknell. That is satisfactory. What between the duties expected of one during one's lifetime, and the duties exacted from one after one's death, land has ceased to be either a profit or a pleasure. It gives one position, and prevents one from keeping it up. That's all that can be said about land.

Jack. I have a country house with some land, of course, attached to it, about fifteen hundred acres, I believe; but I don't depend on that for my real income. In fact, as far as I can make out, the poachers are the only people who make anything out of it.

Lady Bracknell. A country house! How many bedrooms? Well, that point can be cleared up afterwards. You have a town house, I hope? A girl with a simple, unspoiled nature, like Gwendolen, could hardly be expected to reside in the country.

Jack. Well, I own a house in Belgrave Square, but it is let by the year to Lady Bloxham. Of course, I can get it back whenever I like, at six months' notice.

Lady Bracknell. Lady Bloxham? I don't know her.

Jack. Oh, she goes about very little. She is a lady considerably advanced in years.

Lady Bracknell. Ah, nowadays that is no guarantee of respectability of character. What number in Belgrave Square?

Jack. 149.

Lady Bracknell. [*Shaking her head.*] The unfashionable side. I thought there was something. However, that could easily be altered.

Jack. Do you mean the fashion, or the side?

Lady Bracknell. [*Sternly.*] Both, if necessary, I presume. What are your politics?

Jack. Well, I am afraid I really have none. I am a Liberal Unionist.¹

Lady Bracknell. Oh, they count as Tories. They dine with us. Or come in the eve-

¹ Those who left the Liberal Party when its leader, W. E. Gladstone, advocated Home Rule for Ireland in 1885-6.

ning, at any rate. Now to minor matters. Are your parents living?

Jack. I have lost both my parents.

Lady Bracknell. To lose one parent, Mr Worthing, may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness. Who was your father? He was evidently a man of some wealth. Was he born in what the Radical papers call the purple of commerce, or did he rise from the ranks of the aristocracy?

Jack. I am afraid I really don't know. The fact is, Lady Bracknell, I said I had lost my parents. It would be nearer the truth to say that my parents seem to have lost me. . . . I don't actually know who I am by birth. I was . . . well, I was found.

Lady Bracknell. Found!

Jack. The late Mr Thomas Cardew, an old gentleman of a very charitable and kindly disposition, found me, and gave me the name of Worthing, because he happened to have a first-class ticket for Worthing in his pocket at the time. Worthing is a place in Sussex. It is a seaside resort.

Lady Bracknell. Where did the charitable gentleman who had a first-class ticket for this seaside resort find you?

Jack. [Gravely.] In a hand-bag.

Lady Bracknell. A hand-bag?

Jack. [Very seriously.] Yes, Lady Bracknell. I was in a hand-bag—a somewhat large, black leather hand-bag, with handles to it—an ordinary hand-bag in fact.

Lady Bracknell. In what locality did this Mr James, or Thomas, Cardew come across this ordinary hand-bag?

Jack. In the cloak-room at Victoria Station. It was given to him in mistake for his own.

Lady Bracknell. The cloak-room at Victoria Station?

Jack. Yes. The Brighton line.

Lady Bracknell. The line is immaterial. Mr Worthing, I confess I feel somewhat bewildered by what you have just told me. To be born, or at any rate bred, in a hand-bag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that reminds one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution. And I presume you know what that unfortunate movement led to? As for the particular locality in which the hand-bag was found, a cloak-room at a railway station might serve to conceal a social indiscretion—has probably, indeed, been used for that purpose before now—but it could hardly be regarded as an assured basis for a recognized position in good society.

Jack. May I ask you then what you would

advise me to do? I need hardly say I would do anything in the world to ensure Gwendolen's happiness.

Lady Bracknell. I would strongly advise you, Mr Worthing, to try and acquire some relations as soon as possible, and to make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over.

Jack. Well, I don't see how I could possibly manage to do that. I can produce the hand-bag at any moment. It is in my dressing-room at home. I really think that should satisfy you, Lady Bracknell.

Lady Bracknell. Me, sir! What has it to do with me? You can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our only daughter—a girl brought up with the utmost care—to marry into a cloak-room, and form an alliance with a parcel. Good morning, Mr Worthing!

[*She sweeps out in majestic indignation.*]

Jack. Good morning! [ALGERNON, from the other room, strikes up the *Wedding March*. JACK looks perfectly furious, and goes to the door.] For goodness' sake don't play that ghastly tune, Algy! How idiotic you are!

[*The music stops and ALGERNON enters cheerily.*]

Algernon. Didn't it go off all right, old boy? You don't mean to say Gwendolen refused you? I know it is a way she has. She is always refusing people. I think it is most ill-natured of her.

Jack. Oh, Gwendolen is as right as a trivet. As far as she is concerned, we are engaged. Her mother is perfectly unbearable. Never met such a Gorgon. . . . I don't really know what a Gorgon is like, but I am quite sure that Lady Bracknell is one. In any case, she is a monster, without being a myth, which is rather unfair. . . . I beg your pardon, Algy, I suppose I shouldn't talk about your own aunt in that way before you.

Algernon. My dear boy, I love hearing my relations abused. It is the only thing that makes me put up with them at all. Relations are simply a tedious pack of people who haven't got the remotest knowledge of how to live, nor the smallest instinct about when to die.

Jack. Oh, that is nonsense!

Algernon. It isn't!

Jack. Well, I won't argue about the matter. You always want to argue about things.

Algernon. That is exactly what things were originally made for.

Jack. Upon my word, if I thought that,

I'd shoot myself. . . . [*A pause.*] You don't think there is any chance of Gwendolen becoming like her mother in about a hundred and fifty years, do you, Algvy?

Algernon. All women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That's his.

Jack. Is that clever?

Algernon. It is perfectly phrased! and quite as true as any observation in civilized life should be.

Jack. I am sick to death of cleverness. Everybody is clever nowadays. You can't go anywhere without meeting clever people. The thing has become an absolute public nuisance. I wish to goodness we had a few fools left.

Algernon. We have.

Jack. I should extremely like to meet them. What do they talk about?

Algernon. The fools? Oh! about the clever people, of course.

Jack. What fools!

Algernon. By the way, did you tell Gwendolen the truth about your being Ernest in town, and Jack in the country?

Jack. [*In a very patronizing manner.*] My dear fellow, the truth isn't quite the sort of thing one tells to a nice, sweet, refined girl. What extraordinary ideas you have about the way to behave to a woman!

Algernon. The only way to behave to a woman is to make love to her, if she is pretty, and to someone else, if she is plain.

Jack. Oh, that is nonsense.

Algernon. What about your brother? What about the profligate Ernest?

Jack. Oh, before the end of the week I shall have got rid of him. I'll say he died in Paris of apoplexy. Lots of people die of apoplexy, quite suddenly, don't they?

Algernon. Yes, but it's hereditary, my dear fellow. It's a sort of thing that runs in families. You had much better say a severe chill.

Jack. You are sure a severe chill isn't hereditary, or anything of that kind?

Algernon. Of course it isn't!

Jack. Very well, then. My poor brother Ernest is carried off suddenly, in Paris, by a severe chill. That gets rid of him.

Algernon. But I thought you said that . . . Miss Cardew was a little too much interested in your poor brother Ernest? Won't she feel his loss a good deal?

Jack. Oh, that is all right. Cecily is not a silly romantic girl, I am glad to say. She has got a capital appetite, goes long walks, and pays no attention at all to her lessons.

Algernon. I would rather like to see Cecily.

Jack. I will take very good care you never do. She is excessively pretty, and she is only just eighteen.

Algernon. Have you told Gwendolen yet that you have an excessively pretty ward who is only just eighteen?

Jack. Oh! one doesn't blurt these things out to people. Cecily and Gwendolen are perfectly certain to be extremely great friends. I'll bet you anything you like that half an hour after they have met they will be calling each other sister.

Algernon. Women only do that when they have called each other a lot of other things first. Now, my dear boy, if we want to get a good table at Willis's, we really must go and dress. Do you know it is nearly seven?

Jack. [*Irritably.*] Oh! it always is nearly seven.

Algernon. I'm hungry.

Jack. I never knew you when you weren't. . . .

Algernon. What shall we do after dinner? Go to a theatre?

Jack. Oh no! I loathe listening.

Algernon. Well, let us go to the Club?

Jack. Oh, no! I hate talking.

Algernon. Well, we might trot round to the Empire at ten?

Jack. Oh, no! I can't bear looking at things. It is so silly.

Algernon. Well, what shall we do?

Jack. Nothing!

Algernon. It is awfully hard work doing nothing. However, I don't mind hard work where there is no definite object of any kind. [*Enter LANE.*]

Lane. Miss Fairfax.

[*Enter GWENDOLEN. LANE goes out.*]

Algernon. Gwendolen, upon my word!

Gwendolen. Algy, kindly turn your back. I have something very particular to say to Mr Worthing.

Algernon. Really, Gwendolen, I don't think I can allow this at all.

Gwendolen. Algy, you always adopt a strictly immoral attitude towards life. You are not quite old enough to do that.

[*ALGERNON retires to the fire-place.*]

Jack. My own darling!

Gwendolen. Ernest, we may never be married. From the expression on mamma's face I fear we never shall. Few parents nowadays pay any regard to what their children say to them. The old-fashioned respect for the young is fast dying out. Whatever influence I ever had over mamma, I lost at the age of three. But although she may prevent us

from becoming man and wife, and I may marry someone else, and marry often, nothing that she can possibly do can alter my eternal devotion to you.

Jack. Dear Gwendolen!

Gwendolen. The story of your romantic origin, as related to me by mamma, with unpleasing comments, has naturally stirred the deeper fibres of my nature. Your Christian name has an irresistible fascination. The simplicity of your character makes you exquisitely incomprehensible to me. Your town address at the Albany I have. What is your address in the country?

Jack. The Manor House, Woolton, Hertfordshire.

[*ALGERNON, who has been carefully listening, smiles to himself, and writes the address on his shirt-cuff. Then picks up the Railway Guide.*]

Gwendolen. There is a good postal service, I suppose? It may be necessary to do something desperate. That of course will require serious consideration. I will communicate with you daily.

Jack. My own one!

Gwendolen. How long do you remain in town?

Jack. Till Monday.

Gwendolen. Good! Algy, you may turn round now.

Algernon. Thanks, I've turned round already.

Gwendolen. You may also ring the bell.

Jack. You will let me see you to your carriage, my own darling?

Gwendolen. Certainly.

Jack. [*To LANE, who now enters.*] I will see Miss Fairfax out.

Lane. Yes, sir.

[*JACK and GWENDOLEN go off.*]

[*LANE presents several letters on a salver to ALGERNON. It is to be surmised that they are bills, as ALGERNON, after looking at the envelopes, tears them up.*]

Algernon. A glass of sherry, Lane.

Lane. Yes, sir.

Algernon. To-morrow, Lane, I'm going Bunburying.

Lane. Yes, sir.

Algernon. I shall probably not be back till Monday. You can put up my dress clothes, my smoking jacket, and all the Bunbury suits . . .

Lane. Yes, sir. [*Handing sherry.*]

Algernon. I hope to-morrow will be a fine day, Lane.

Lane. It never is, sir.

Algernon. Lane, you're a perfect pessimist.

Lane. I do my best to give satisfaction, sir. [*Enter JACK. LANE goes off.*]

Jack. There's a sensible, intellectual girl! the only girl I ever cared for in my life. [*ALGERNON is laughing immoderately.*]

What on earth are you so amused at?

Algernon. Oh, I'm a little anxious about

poor Bunbury, that is all.

Jack. If you don't take care, your friend Bunbury will get you into a serious scrape some day.

Algernon. I love scrapes. They are the only things that are never serious.

Jack. Oh, that's nonsense, Algy. You never talk anything but nonsense.

Algernon. Nobody ever does.

[*JACK looks indignantly at him, and leaves the room. ALGERNON lights a cigarette, reads his shirt-cuff, and smiles.*]

CURTAIN

SECOND ACT

Garden at the Manor House. A flight of grey stone steps leads up to the house. The garden, an old-fashioned one, full of roses. Time of year, July. Basket chairs, and a table covered with books, are set under a large yew-tree.

[*MISS PRISM discovered seated at the table. CECILY is at the back, watering flowers.*]

Miss Prism. [*Calling.*] Cecily, Cecily! Surely such a utilitarian occupation as the

watering of flowers is rather Moulton's duty than yours? Especially at a moment when intellectual pleasures await you. Your German grammar is on the table. Pray open it at page fifteen. We will repeat yesterday's lesson.

Cecily. [*Coming over very slowly.*] But I don't like German. It isn't at all a becoming language. I know perfectly well that I look quite plain after my German lesson.

Miss Prism. Child, you know how anxious your guardian is that you should improve

yourself in every way. He laid particular stress on your German, as he was leaving for town yesterday. Indeed, he always lays stress on your German when he is leaving for town.

Cecily. Dear Uncle Jack is so very serious! Sometimes he is so serious that I think he cannot be quite well.

Miss Prism. [*Drawing herself up.*] Your guardian enjoys the best of health, and his gravity of demeanour is especially to be commended in one so comparatively young as he is. I know no one who has a higher sense of duty and responsibility.

Cecily. I suppose that is why he often looks a little bored when we three are together.

Miss Prism. Cecily! I am surprised at you. Mr Worthing has many troubles in his life. Idle merriment and triviality would be out of place in his conversation. You must remember his constant anxiety about that unfortunate young man his brother.

Cecily. I wish Uncle Jack would allow that unfortunate young man, his brother, to come down here sometimes. We might have a good influence over him, Miss Prism. I am sure you certainly would. You know German, and geology, and things of that kind influence a man very much.

[*CECILY begins to write in her diary.*]

Miss Prism. [*Shaking her head.*] I do not think that even I could produce any effect on a character that according to his own brother's admission is irretrievably weak and vacillating. Indeed I am not sure that I would desire to reclaim him. I am not in favor of this modern mania for turning bad people into good people at a moment's notice. As a man sows so let him reap. You must put away your diary, Cecily. I really don't see why you should keep a diary at all.

Cecily. I keep a diary in order to enter the wonderful secrets of my life. If I didn't write them down, I should probably forget all about them.

Miss Prism. Memory, my dear Cecily, is the diary that we all carry about with us.

Cecily. Yes, but it usually chronicles the things that have never happened, and couldn't possibly have happened. I believe that Memory is responsible for nearly all the three-volume novels that Mudie¹ sends us.

Miss Prism. Do not speak slightly of the three-volume novel, Cecily. I wrote one myself in earlier days.

Cecily. Did you really, Miss Prism? How wonderfully clever you are! I hope it did not end happily. I don't like novels that end happily. They depress me so much.

Miss Prism. The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means.

Cecily. I suppose so. But it seems very unfair. And was your novel ever published?

Miss Prism. Alas! no. The manuscript unfortunately was abandoned. [*CECILY starts.*] I used the word in the sense of lost or mislaid. To your work, child, these speculations are profitless.

Cecily. [*Smiling.*] But I see dear Dr Chasuble coming up through the garden.

Miss Prism. [*Rising and advancing.*] Dr Chasuble! This is indeed a pleasure.

[*Enter CANON CHASUBLE.*]

Chasuble. And how are we this morning? Miss Prism, you are, I trust, well?

Cecily. Miss Prism has just been complaining of a slight headache. I think it would do her so much good to have a short stroll with you in the Park, Dr Chasuble.

Miss Prism. Cecily, I have not mentioned anything about a headache.

Cecily. No, dear Miss Prism, I know that, but I felt instinctively that you had a headache. Indeed I was thinking about that, and not about my German lesson, when the Rector came in.

Chasuble. I hope, Cecily, you are not inattentive.

Cecily. Oh, I am afraid I am.

Chasuble. That is strange. Were I fortunate enough to be Miss Prism's pupil, I would hang upon her lips. [*MISS PRISM glares.*] I spoke metaphorically.—My metaphor was drawn from bees. Ahem! Mr Worthing, I suppose, has not returned from town yet?

Miss Prism. We do not expect him till Monday afternoon.

Chasuble. Ah yes, he usually likes to spend his Sunday in London. He is not one of those whose sole aim is enjoyment, as, by all accounts, that unfortunate young man his brother seems to be. But I must not disturb Egeria and her pupil any longer.

Miss Prism. Egeria? My name is Laetitia, Doctor.

Chasuble. [*Bowing.*] A classical allusion merely, drawn from the Pagan authors. I shall see you both no doubt at Evensong?

Miss Prism. I think, dear Doctor, I will have a stroll with you. I find I have a headache after all, and a walk might do it good.

Chasuble. With pleasure, Miss Prism, with

¹ Mudie's Lending Library, a very popular and successful Victorian institution.

pleasure. We might go as far as the schools and back.

Miss Prism. That would be delightful. Cecily, you will read your Political Economy in my absence. The chapter on the Fall of the Rupee you may omit. It is somewhat too sensational. Even these metallic problems have their melodramatic side.

[*Goes down the garden with DR CHASUBLE.*]

Cecily. [*Picks up books and throws them back on table.*] Horrid Political Economy! Horrid Geography! Horrid, horrid German!

[*Enter MERRIMAN with a card on a salver.*]

Merriman. Mr Ernest Worthing has just driven over from the station. He has brought his luggage with him.

Cecily. [*Takes the card and reads it.*] 'Mr Ernest Worthing, B.4, The Albany, W.' Uncle Jack's brother! Did you tell him Mr Worthing was in town?

Merriman. Yes, Miss. He seemed very much disappointed. I mentioned that you and Miss Prism were in the garden. He said he was anxious to speak to you privately for a moment.

Cecily. Ask Mr Ernest Worthing to come here. I suppose you had better talk to the housekeeper about a room for him.

Merriman. Yes, Miss.

[*MERRIMAN goes off.*]

Cecily. I have never met any really wicked person before. I feel rather frightened. I am so afraid he will look just like every one else. [*Enter ALGERNON, very gay and debonair.*] He does!

Algernon. [*Raising his hat.*] You are my little cousin Cecily, I'm sure.

Cecily. You are under some strange mistake. I am not little. In fact, I believe I am more than usually tall for my age. [*ALGERNON is rather taken aback.*] But I am your cousin Cecily. You, I see from your card, are Uncle Jack's brother, my cousin Ernest, my wicked cousin Ernest.

Algernon. Oh! I am not really wicked at all, cousin Cecily. You mustn't think that I am wicked.

Cecily. If you are not, then you have certainly been deceiving us all in a very inexcusable manner. I hope you have not been leading a double life, pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time. That would be hypocrisy.

Algernon. [*Looks at her in amazement.*] Oh! Of course I have been rather reckless.

Cecily. I am glad to hear it.

Algernon. In fact, now you mention the

subject, I have been very bad in my own small way.

Cecily. I don't think you should be so proud of that, though I am sure it must have been very pleasant.

Algernon. It is much pleasanter being here with you.

Cecily. I can't understand how you are here at all. Uncle Jack won't be back till Monday afternoon.

Algernon. That is a great disappointment. I am obliged to go up by the first train on Monday morning. I have a business appointment that I am anxious . . . to miss!

Cecily. Couldn't you miss it anywhere but in London?

Algernon. No: the appointment is in London.

Cecily. Well, I know, of course, how important it is not to keep a business engagement, if one wants to retain any sense of the beauty of life, but still I think you had better wait till Uncle Jack arrives. I know he wants to speak to you about your emigrating.

Algernon. About my what?

Cecily. Your emigrating. He has gone up to buy your outfit.

Algernon. I certainly wouldn't let Jack buy my outfit. He has no taste in neckties at all.

Cecily. I don't think you will require neckties. Uncle Jack is sending you to Australia.

Algernon. Australia! I'd sooner die.

Cecily. Well, he said at dinner on Wednesday night, that you would have to choose between this world, the next world, and Australia.

Algernon. Oh, well! The accounts I have received of Australia and the next world are not particularly encouraging. This world is good enough for me, cousin Cecily.

Cecily. Yes, but are you good enough for it?

Algernon. I'm afraid I'm not that. That is why I want you to reform me. You might make that your mission, if you don't mind, cousin Cecily.

Cecily. I'm afraid I've no time, this afternoon.

Algernon. Well, would you mind my reforming myself this afternoon?

Cecily. It is rather Quixotic of you. But I think you should try.

Algernon. I will. I feel better already.

Cecily. You are looking a little worse.

Algernon. That is because I am hungry.

Cecily. How thoughtless of me. I should have remembered that when one is going to

lead an entirely new life, one requires regular and wholesome meals. Won't you come in?

Algernon. Thank you. Might I have a buttonhole first. I have never any appetite unless I have a buttonhole first.

Cecily. A Maréchal Niel?

[*Picks up scissors.*]

Algernon. No, I'd sooner have a pink rose.

Cecily. Why? [*Cuts a flower.*]

Algernon. Because you are like a pink rose, cousin Cecily.

Cecily. I don't think it can be right for you to talk to me like that. Miss Prism never says such things to me.

Algernon. Then Miss Prism is a short-sighted old lady. [*CECILY puts the rose in his buttonhole.*] You are the prettiest girl I ever saw.

Cecily. Miss Prism says that all good looks are a snare.

Algernon. They are a snare that every sensible man would like to be caught in.

Cecily. Oh, I don't think I would care to catch a sensible man. I shouldn't know what to talk to him about.

[*They pass into the house.* MISS PRISM and DR CHASUBLE return.]

Miss Prism. You are too much alone, dear Dr Chasuble. You should get married. A misanthrope I can understand—a woman-thrope, never!

Chasuble. [*With a scholar's shudder.*] Believe me, I do not deserve so neologistic a phrase. The precept as well as the practice of the Primitive Church was distinctly against matrimony.

Miss Prism. [*Sententiously.*] That is obviously the reason why the Primitive Church has not lasted up to the present day. And you do not seem to realize, dear Doctor, that by persistently remaining single, a man converts himself into a permanent public temptation. Men should be more careful; this very celibacy leads weaker vessels astray.

Chasuble. But is a man not equally attractive when married?

Miss Prism. No married man is ever attractive except to his wife.

Chasuble. And often, I've been told, not even to her.

Miss Prism. That depends on the intellectual sympathies of the woman. Maturity can always be depended on. Ripeness can be trusted. Young women are green. [*DR CHASUBLE starts.*] I spoke horticulturally. My metaphor was drawn from fruits. But where is Cecily?

Chasuble. Perhaps she followed us to the schools.

[*Enter JACK slowly from the back of the*

garden. He is dressed in the deepest mourning, with crepe hatband and black gloves.]

Miss Prism. Mr Worthing!

Chasuble. Mr Worthing?

Miss Prism. This is indeed a surprise. We did not look for you till Monday afternoon.

Jack. [*Shakes MISS PRISM's hand in a tragic manner.*] I have returned sooner than I expected. Dr Chasuble, I hope you are well?

Chasuble. Dear Mr Worthing, I trust this garb of woe does not betoken some terrible calamity?

Jack. My brother.

Miss Prism. More shameful debts and extravagance?

Chasuble. Still leading his life of pleasure?

Jack. [*Shaking his head.*] Dead!

Chasuble. Your brother Ernest dead?

Jack. Quite dead.

Miss Prism. What a lesson for him! I trust he will profit by it.

Chasuble. Mr Worthing, I offer you my sincere condolence. You have at least the consolation of knowing that you were always the most generous and forgiving of brothers.

Jack. Poor Ernest! He had many faults, but it is a sad, sad blow.

Chasuble. Very sad indeed. Were you with him at the end?

Jack. No. He died abroad; in Paris, in fact. I had a telegram last night from the manager of the Grand Hotel.

Chasuble. Was the cause of death mentioned?

Jack. A severe chill, it seems.

Miss Prism. As a man sows, so shall he reap.

Chasuble. [*Raising his hand.*] Charity, dear Miss Prism, charity! None of us are perfect. I myself am peculiarly susceptible to draughts. Will the interment take place here?

Jack. No. He seems to have expressed a desire to be buried in Paris.

Chasuble. In Paris! [*Shakes his head.*] I fear that hardly points to any very serious state of mind at the last. You would no doubt wish me to make some slight allusion to this tragic domestic affliction next Sunday. [*JACK presses his hand convulsively.*] My sermon on the meaning of the manna in the wilderness can be adapted to almost any occasion, joyful, or, as in the present case, distressing. [*All sigh.*] I have preached it at harvest celebrations, christenings, confirmations, on days of humiliation and festal days. The last time I delivered it was in the Ca-

thedral, as a charity sermon on behalf of the Society for the Prevention of Discontent among the Upper Orders. The Bishop, who was present, was much struck by some of the analogies I drew.

Jack. Ah! that reminds me, you mentioned christenings, I think, Dr Chasuble? I suppose you know how to christen all right? [*DR CHASUBLE looks astounded.*] I mean, of course, you are continually christening, aren't you?

Miss Prism. It is, I regret to say, one of the Rector's most constant duties in this parish. I have often spoken to the poorer classes on the subject. But they don't seem to know what thrift is.

Chasuble. But is there any particular infant in whom you are interested, Mr Worthing? Your brother was, I believe, unmarried, was he not?

Jack. Oh yes.

Miss Prism. [*Bitterly.*] People who live entirely for pleasure usually are.

Jack. But it is not for any child, dear Doctor. I am very fond of children. No! the fact is, I would like to be christened myself, this afternoon, if you have nothing better to do.

Chasuble. But surely, Mr Worthing, you have been christened already?

Jack. I don't remember anything about it.

Chasuble. But have you any grave doubts on the subject?

Jack. I certainly intend to have. Of course I don't know if the thing would bother you in any way, or if you think I am a little too old now.

Chasuble. Not at all. The sprinkling, and, indeed, the immersion of adults is a perfectly canonical practice.

Jack. Immersion!

Chasuble. You need have no apprehensions. Sprinkling is all that is necessary, or indeed I think advisable. Our weather is so changeable. At what hour would you wish the ceremony performed?

Jack. Oh, I might trot round about five if that would suit you.

Chasuble. Perfectly, perfectly! In fact, I have two similar ceremonies to perform at that time. A case of twins that occurred recently in one of the outlying cottages on your own estate. Poor Jenkins the carter, a most hard-working man.

Jack. Oh! I don't see much fun in being christened along with other babies. It would be childish. Would half-past five do?

Chasuble. Admirably! Admirably! [*Takes out watch.*] And now, dear Mr Worthing, I will not intrude any longer into

a house of sorrow. I would merely beg you not to be too much bowed down by grief. What seem to us bitter trials are often blessings in disguise.

Miss Prism. This seems to me a blessing of an extremely obvious kind.

[*Enter CECILY from the house.*]

Cecily. Uncle Jack! Oh, I am pleased to see you back. But what horrid clothes you have got on. Do go and change them.

Miss Prism. Cecily!

Chasuble. My child! my child!

[*CECILY goes toward JACK; he kisses her brow in a melancholy manner.*]

Cecily. What is the matter, Uncle Jack? Do look happy! You look as if you had a toothache, and I have got such a surprise for you. Who do you think is in the dining-room? Your brother!

Jack. Who?

Cecily. Your brother Ernest. He arrived about half an hour ago.

Jack. What nonsense! I haven't got a brother.

Cecily. Oh, don't say that. However badly he may have behaved to you in the past he is still your brother. You couldn't be so heartless as to disown him. I'll tell him to come out. And you will shake hands with him, won't you, Uncle Jack?

[*Runs back into the house.*]

Chasuble. These are very joyful tidings.

Miss Prism. After we had all been resigned to his loss, his sudden return seems to me peculiarly distressing.

Jack. My brother is in the dining-room? I don't know what it all means. I think it is perfectly absurd.

[*Enter ALGERNON and CECILY hand in hand. They come slowly up to JACK.*]

Jack. Good heavens!

[*Motions ALGERNON away.*]

Algernon. Brother John, I have come down from town to tell you that I am very sorry for all the trouble I have given you, and that I intend to lead a better life in the future.

[*JACK glares at him and does not take his hand.*]

Cecily. Uncle Jack, you are not going to refuse your own brother's hand?

Jack. Nothing will induce me to take his hand. I think his coming down here disgraceful. He knows perfectly well why.

Cecily. Uncle Jack, do be nice. There is some good in everyone. Ernest has just been telling me about his poor invalid friend, Mr Bunbury, whom he goes to visit so often. And surely there must be much good in one who is kind to an invalid, and leaves the

pleasures of London to sit by a bed of pain.

Jack. Oh! he has been talking about Bunbury, has he?

Cecily. Yes, he has told me all about poor Mr Bunbury, and his terrible state of health.

Jack. Bunbury! Well, I won't have him talk to you about Bunbury or about anything else. It is enough to drive one perfectly frantic.

Algernon. Of course I admit that the faults were all on my side. But I must say that I think that Brother John's coldness to me is peculiarly painful. I expected a more enthusiastic welcome, especially considering it is the first time I have come here.

Cecily. Uncle Jack, if you don't shake hands with Ernest I will never forgive you.

Jack. Never forgive me?

Cecily. Never, never, never!

Jack. Well, this is the last time I shall ever do it.

[*Shakes hands with* ALGERNON *and glares.*]

Chasuble. It's pleasant, is it not, to see so perfect a reconciliation? I think we might leave the two brothers together.

Miss Prism. Cecily, you will come with us.

Cecily. Certainly, Miss Prism. My little task of reconciliation is over.

Chasuble. You have done a beautiful action to-day, dear child.

Miss Prism. We must not be premature in our judgements.

Cecily. I feel very happy.

[*They all go off except* JACK *and* ALGERNON.]

Jack. You young scoundrel, Algy, you must get out of this place as soon as possible. I don't allow any Bunburying here.

[*Enter* MERRIMAN.]

Merriman. I have put Mr Ernest's things in the room next to yours, sir. I suppose that is all right?

Jack. What?

Merriman. Mr Ernest's luggage sir. I have unpacked it and put it in the room next to your own.

Jack. His luggage?

Merriman. Yes, sir. Three portmanteaus, a dressing-case, two hat-boxes, and a large luncheon-basket.

Algernon. I am afraid I can't stay more than a week this time.

Jack. Merriman, order the dog-cart at once. Mr Ernest has been suddenly called back to town.

Merriman. Yes, sir.

[*Goes back into the house.*]

Algernon. What a fearful liar you are,

Jack. I have not been called back to town at all.

Jack. Yes, you have.

Algernon. I haven't heard any one call me.

Jack. Your duty as a gentleman calls you back.

Algernon. My duty as a gentleman has never interfered with my pleasures in the smallest degree.

Jack. I can quite understand that.

Algernon. Well, Cecily is a darling.

Jack. You are not to talk of Miss Cardew like that. I don't like it.

Algernon. Well, I don't like your clothes. You look perfectly ridiculous in them. Why on earth don't you go up and change? It is perfectly childish to be in deep mourning for a man who is actually staying for a whole week with you in your house as a guest. I call it grotesque.

Jack. You are certainly not staying with me for a whole week as a guest or anything else. You have got to leave . . . by the four-five train.

Algernon. I certainly won't leave you so long as you are in mourning. It would be most unfriendly. If I were in mourning you would stay with me, I suppose. I should think it very unkind if you didn't.

Jack. Well, will you go if I change my clothes?

Algernon. Yes, if you are not too long. I never saw anybody take so long to dress, and with such little result.

Jack. Well, at any rate, that is better than being always over-dressed as you are.

Algernon. If I am occasionally a little over-dressed, I make up for it by being always immensely over-educated.

Jack. Your vanity is ridiculous, your conduct an outrage, and your presence in my garden utterly absurd. However, you have got to catch the four-five, and I hope you will have a pleasant journey back to town. This Bunburying, as you call it, has not been a great success for you.

[*Goes into the house.*]

Algernon. I think it has been a great success. I'm in love with Cecily, and that is everything. [*Enter* CECILY *at the back of the garden. She picks up the can and begins to water the flowers.*] But I must see her before I go, and make arrangements for another Bunbury. Ah, there she is.

Cecily. Oh, I merely came back to water the roses. I thought you were with Uncle Jack.

Algernon. He's gone to order the dog-cart for me.

Cecily. Oh, is he going to take you for a nice drive?

Algernon. He's going to send me away.

Cecily. Then have we got to part?

Algernon. I am afraid so. It's a very painful parting.

Cecily. It is always painful to part from people whom one has known for a very brief space of time. The absence of old friends one can endure with equanimity. But even a momentary separation from any one to whom one has just been introduced is almost unbearable.

Algernon. Thank you.

[Enter MERRIMAN.]

Merriman. The dog-cart is at the door, sir.

[ALGERNON looks appealingly at CECILY.]

Cecily. It can wait, Merriman . . . for . . . five minutes.

Merriman. Yes, miss. [Exit MERRIMAN.]

Algernon. I hope, Cecily, I shall not offend you if I state quite frankly and openly that you seem to me to be in every way the visible personification of absolute perfection.

Cecily. I think your frankness does you great credit, Ernest. If you will allow me, I will copy your remarks into my diary.

[Goes over to table and begins writing in diary.]

Algernon. Do you really keep a diary? I'd give anything to look at it. May I?

Cecily. Oh no. [Puts her hand over it.] You see, it is simply a very young girl's record of her own thoughts and impressions, and consequently meant for publication. When it appears in volume form I hope you will order a copy. But pray, Ernest, don't stop. I delight in taking down from dictation. I have reached 'absolute perfection.' You can go on. I am quite ready for more.

Algernon. [Somewhat taken aback.] Ahem! Ahem!

Cecily. Oh, don't cough, Ernest. When one is dictating one should speak fluently and not cough. Besides, I don't know how to spell a cough.

[Writes as ALGERNON speaks.]

Algernon. [Speaking very rapidly.] Cecily, ever since I first looked upon your wonderful and incomparable beauty, I have dared to love you wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly.

Cecily. I don't think that you should tell me that you love me wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly. Hopelessly doesn't seem to make much sense, does it?

Algernon. Cecily. [Enter MERRIMAN.]

Merriman. The dog-cart is waiting, sir.

Algernon. Tell it to come round next week, at the same hour.

Merriman. [Looks at CECILY, who makes no sign.] Yes, sir. [MERRIMAN retires.]

Cecily. Uncle Jack would be very much annoyed if he knew you were staying on till next week, at the same hour.

Algernon. Oh, I don't care about Jack. I don't care for anybody in the whole world but you. I love you, Cecily. You will marry me, won't you?

Cecily. You silly boy! Of course. Why, we have been engaged for the last three months.

Algernon. For the last three months?

Cecily. Yes, it will be exactly three months on Thursday.

Algernon. But how did we become engaged?

Cecily. Well, ever since dear Uncle Jack first confessed to us that he had a younger brother who was very wicked and bad, you of course have formed the chief topic of conversation between myself and Miss Prism. And of course a man who is much talked about is always very attractive. One feels there must be something in him, after all. I daresay it was foolish of me, but I fell in love with you, Ernest.

Algernon. Darling. And when was the engagement actually settled?

Cecily. On the 14th of February last. Worn out by your entire ignorance of my existence, I determined to end the matter one way or the other, and after a long struggle with myself I accepted you under this dear old tree here. The next day I bought this little ring in your name, and this is the little bangle with the true lover's knot I promised you always to wear.

Algernon. Did I give you this? It's very pretty, isn't it?

Cecily. Yes, you've wonderfully good taste, Ernest. It's the excuse I've always given for your leading such a bad life. And this is the box in which I keep all your dear letters.

[Kneels at table, opens box, and produces letters tied up with blue ribbon.]

Algernon. My letters! But, my own sweet Cecily, I have never written you any letters.

Cecily. You need hardly remind me of that, Ernest. I remember only too well that I was forced to write your letters for you. I wrote always three times a week, and sometimes oftener.

Algernon. Oh, do let me read them, Cecily?

Cecily. Oh, I couldn't possibly. They would make you far too conceited. [Replaces

box.] The three you wrote me after I had broken off the engagement are so beautiful, and so badly spelled, that even now I can hardly read them without crying a little.

Algernon. But was our engagement ever broken off?

Cecily. Of course it was. On the 22nd of last March. You can see the entry if you like. [*Shows diary.*] 'To-day I broke off my engagement with Ernest. I feel it is better to do so. The weather still continues charming.'

Algernon. But why on earth did you break it off? What had I done? I had done nothing at all. Cecily, I am very much hurt indeed to hear you broke it off. Particularly when the weather was so charming.

Cecily. It would hardly have been a really serious engagement if it hadn't been broken off at least once. But I forgave you before the week was out.

Algernon. [*Crossing to her, and kneeling.*] What a perfect angel you are, Cecily.

Cecily. You dear romantic boy. [*He kisses her, she puts her fingers through his hair.*] I hope your hair curls naturally, does it?

Algernon. Yes, darling, with a little help from others.

Cecily. I am so glad.

Algernon. You'll never break off our engagement again, Cecily?

Cecily. I don't think I could break it off now that I have actually met you. Besides, of course, there is the question of your name.

Algernon. Yes, of course. [*Nervously.*]

Cecily. You must not laugh at me, darling, but it had always been a girlish dream of mine to love some one whose name was Ernest. [*ALGERNON rises, CECILY also.*] There is something in that name that seems to inspire absolute confidence. I pity any poor married woman whose husband is not called Ernest.

Algernon. But, my dear child, do you mean to say you could not love me if I had some other name?

Cecily. But what name?

Algernon. Oh, any name you like—Algernon—for instance . . .

Cecily. But I don't like the name of Algernon.

Algernon. Well, my own dear, sweet, loving little darling, I really can't see why you should object to the name of Algernon. It is not at all a bad name. In fact, it is rather an aristocratic name. Half of the chaps who get into the Bankruptcy Court are called Algernon. But seriously, Cecily . . .

[*Moving to her.*] if my name was Algy, couldn't you love me?

Cecily. [*Rising.*] I might respect you, Ernest, I might admire your character, but I fear that I should not be able to give you my undivided attention.

Algernon. Ahem! Cecily! [*Picking up hat.*] Your Rector here is, I suppose, thoroughly experienced in the practice of all the rites and ceremonials of the Church?

Cecily. Oh, yes. Dr Chasuble is a most learned man. He has never written a single book, so you can imagine how much he knows.

Algernon. I must see him at once on a most important christening—I mean on most important business.

Cecily. Oh!

Algernon. I shan't be away more than half an hour.

Cecily. Considering that we have been engaged since February the 14th, and that I only met you to-day for the first time, I think it is rather hard that you should leave me for so long a period as half an hour. Couldn't you make it twenty minutes?

Algernon. I'll be back in no time.

[*Kisses her and rushes down the garden.*]

Cecily. What an impetuous boy he is! I like his hair so much. I must enter his proposal in my diary. [*Enter MERRIMAN.*]

Merriman. A Miss Fairfax has just called to see Mr Worthing. On very important business, Miss Fairfax states.

Cecily. Isn't Mr Worthing in his library?

Merriman. Mr Worthing went over in the direction of the Rectory some time ago.

Cecily. Pray ask the lady to come out here; Mr Worthing is sure to be back soon. And you can bring tea.

Merriman. Yes, Miss. [*Goes out.*]

Cecily. Miss Fairfax! I suppose one of the many good elderly women who are associated with Uncle Jack in some of his philanthropic work in London. I don't quite like women who are interested in philanthropic work. I think it is so forward of them.

[*Enter MERRIMAN.*]

Merriman. Miss Fairfax.

[*Enter GWENDOLEN. Exit MERRIMAN.*]

Cecily. [*Advancing to meet her.*] Pray let me introduce myself to you. My name is Cecily Cardew.

Gwendolen. Cecily Cardew? [*Moving to her and shaking hands.*] What a very sweet name! Something tells me that we are going to be great friends. I like you already more than I can say. My first impressions of people are never wrong.

Cecily. How nice of you to like me so much after we have known each other such a comparatively short time. Pray sit down.

Gwendolen. [*Still standing up.*] I may call you Cecily, may I not?

Cecily. With pleasure!

Gwendolen. And you will always call me Gwendolen, won't you?

Cecily. If you wish.

Gwendolen. Then that is all quite settled, is it not?

Cecily. I hope so.

[*A pause. They both sit down together.*]

Gwendolen. Perhaps this might be a favorable opportunity for my mentioning who I am. My father is Lord Bracknell. You have never heard of papa, I suppose?

Cecily. I don't think so.

Gwendolen. Outside the family circle, papa, I am glad to say, is entirely unknown. I think that is quite as it should be. The home seems to me to be the proper sphere for the man. And certainly once a man begins to neglect his domestic duties he becomes painfully effeminate, does he not? And I don't like that. It makes men so very attractive. Cecily, mamma, whose views on education are remarkably strict, has brought me up to be extremely shortsighted; it is part of her system; so do you mind my looking at you through my glasses?

Cecily. Oh! Not at all, Gwendolen. I am very fond of being looked at.

Gwendolen. [*After examining CECILY carefully through a lorgnette.*] You are here on a short visit, I suppose.

Cecily. Oh no! I live here.

Gwendolen. [*Severely.*] Really? Your mother, no doubt, or some female relative of advanced years, resides here also?

Cecily. Oh no! I have no mother, nor, in fact, any relations.

Gwendolen. Indeed?

Cecily. My dear guardian, with the assistance of Miss Prism, has the arduous task of looking after me.

Gwendolen. Your guardian?

Cecily. Yes, I am Mr Worthing's ward.

Gwendolen. Oh! It is strange he never mentioned to me that he had a ward. How secretive of him! He grows more interesting hourly. I am not sure, however, that the news inspires me with feelings of unmixed delight. [*Rising and going to her.*] I am very fond of you, Cecily; I have liked you ever since I met you! But I am bound to state that now that I know that you are Mr Worthing's ward, I cannot help expressing a wish you were—well, just a little older than you seem to be—and not quite so very allur-

ing in appearance. In fact, if I may speak candidly—

Cecily. Pray do! I think that whenever one has anything unpleasant to say, one should always be quite candid.

Gwendolen. Well, to speak with perfect candour, Cecily, I wish that you were fully forty-two, and more than usually plain for your age. Ernest has a strong upright nature. He is the very soul of truth and honour. Disloyalty would be as impossible to him as deception. But even men of the noblest possible moral character are extremely susceptible to the influence of the physical charms of others. Modern, no less than Ancient History, supplies us with many most painful examples of what I refer to. If it were not so, indeed, History would be quite unreadable.

Cecily. I beg your pardon, Gwendolen, did you say Ernest?

Gwendolen. Yes.

Cecily. Oh, but it is not Mr Ernest Worthing who is my guardian. It is his brother—his elder brother.

Gwendolen. [*Sitting down again.*] Ernest never mentioned to me that he had a brother.

Cecily. I am sorry to say they have not been on good terms for a long time.

Gwendolen. Ah! that accounts for it. And now that I think of it I have never heard any man mention his brother. The subject seems distasteful to most men. Cecily, you have lifted a load from my mind. I was growing almost anxious. It would have been terrible if any cloud had come across a friendship like ours, would it not? Of course you are quite, quite sure that it is not Mr Ernest Worthing who is your guardian?

Cecily. Quite sure. [*A pause.*] In fact, I am going to be his.

Gwendolen. [*Inquiringly.*] I beg your pardon?

Cecily. [*Rather shy and confidingly.*] Dearest Gwendolen, there is no reason why I should make a secret of it to you. Our little county newspaper is sure to chronicle the fact next week. Mr Ernest Worthing and I are engaged to be married.

Gwendolen. [*Quite politely, rising.*] My darling Cecily, I think there must be some slight error. Mr Ernest Worthing is engaged to me. The announcement will appear in the *Morning Post* on Saturday at the latest.

Cecily. [*Very politely, rising.*] I am afraid you must be under some misconception. Ernest proposed to me exactly ten minutes ago. [*Shows diary.*]

Gwendolen. [*Examines diary through her lorgnette carefully.*] It is very curious, for he asked me to be his wife yesterday after-

noon at 5.30. If you would care to verify the incident, pray do so. [*Produces diary of her own.*] I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train. I am so sorry, dear Cecily, if it is any disappointment to you, but I am afraid I have the prior claim.

Cecily. It would distress me more than I can tell you, dear Gwendolen, if it caused you any mental or physical anguish, but I feel bound to point out that since Ernest proposed to you he clearly has changed his mind.

Gwendolen. [*Meditatively.*] If the poor fellow has been entrapped into any foolish promise I shall consider it my duty to rescue him at once, and with a firm hand.

Cecily. [*Thoughtfully and sadly.*] Whatever unfortunate entanglement my dear boy may have got into, I will never reproach him with it after we are married.

Gwendolen. Do you allude to me, Miss Cardew, as an entanglement? You are presumptuous. On an occasion of this kind it becomes more than a moral duty to speak one's mind. It becomes a pleasure.

Cecily. Do you suggest, Miss Fairfax, that I entrapped Ernest into an engagement? How dare you? This is no time for wearing the shallow mask of manners. When I see a spade I call it a spade.

Gwendolen. [*Satirically.*] I am glad to say that I have never seen a spade. It is obvious that our social spheres have been widely different.

[*Enter MERRIMAN, followed by the footman. He carries a salver, table cloth, and plate stand. CECILY is about to retort. The presence of the servants exercises a restraining influence, under which both girls chafe.*]

Merriman. Shall I lay tea here as usual, Miss?

Cecily. [*Sternly, in a calm voice.*] Yes, as usual.

[*MERRIMAN begins to clear table and lay cloth. A long pause. CECILY and GWENDOLEN glare at each other.*]

Gwendolen. Are there many interesting walks in the vicinity, Miss Cardew?

Cecily. Oh, yes! a great many. From the top of one of the hills quite close one can see five counties.

Gwendolen. Five counties! I don't think I should like that; I hate crowds.

Cecily. [*Sweetly.*] I suppose that is why you live in town?

[*GWENDOLEN bites her lip, and beats her foot nervously with her parasol.*]

Gwendolen. [*Looking round.*] Quite a

well-kept garden this is, Miss Cardew.

Cecily. So glad you like it, Miss Fairfax.

Gwendolen. I had no idea there were any flowers in the country.

Cecily. Oh, flowers are as common here, Miss Fairfax, as people are in London.

Gwendolen. Personally I cannot understand how anybody manages to exist in the country, if anybody who is anybody does. The country always bores me to death.

Cecily. Ah! This is what the newspapers call agricultural depression, is it not? I believe the aristocracy are suffering very much from it just at present. It is almost an epidemic amongst them, I have been told. May I offer you some tea, Miss Fairfax?

Gwendolen. [*With elaborate politeness.*] Thank you. [*Aside.*] Detestable girl! But I require tea!

Cecily. [*Sweetly.*] Sugar?

Gwendolen. [*Superciliously.*] No, thank you. Sugar is not fashionable any more.

[*CECILY looks angrily at her, takes up the tongs and puts four lumps of sugar into the cup.*]

Cecily. [*Severely.*] Cake or bread and butter?

Gwendolen. [*In a bored manner.*] Bread and butter, please. Cake is rarely seen at the best houses nowadays.

Cecily. [*Cuts a very large slice of cake and puts it on the tray.*] Hand that to Miss Fairfax.

[*MERRIMAN does so, and goes out with footman. GWENDOLEN drinks the tea and makes a grimace. Puts down cup at once, reaches out her hand to the bread and butter, looks at it, and finds it is cake. Rises in indignation.*]

Gwendolen. You have filled my tea with lumps of sugar, and though I asked most distinctly for bread and butter, you have given me cake. I am known for the gentleness of my disposition, and the extraordinary sweetness of my nature, but I warn you, Miss Cardew, you may go too far.

Cecily. [*Rising.*] To save my poor, innocent, trusting boy from the machinations of any other girl there are no lengths to which I would not go.

Gwendolen. From the moment I saw you I distrusted you. I felt that you were false and deceitful. I am never deceived in such matters. My first impressions of people are invariably right.

Cecily. It seems to me, Miss Fairfax, that I am trespassing on your valuable time. No doubt you have many other calls of a similar character to make in the neighborhood. [*Enter JACK.*]

Gwendolen. [*Catching sight of him.*] Ernest! My own Ernest!

Jack. Gwendolen! Darling!

[*Offers to kiss her.*]

Gwendolen. [*Drawing back.*] A moment! May I ask if you are engaged to be married to this young lady? [*Points to CECILY.*]

Jack. [*Laughing.*] To dear little Cecily! Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

Gwendolen. Thank you. You may!

[*Offers her cheek.*]

Cecily. [*Very sweetly.*] I knew there must be some misunderstanding, Miss Fairfax. The gentleman whose arm is at present round your waist is my guardian, Mr John Worthing.

Gwendolen. I beg your pardon?

Cecily. This is Uncle Jack!

Gwendolen. [*Receding.*] Jack! Oh!

[*Enter ALGERNON.*]

Cecily. Here is Ernest.

Algernon. [*Goes straight over to CECILY without noticing anyone else.*] My own love! [*Offers to kiss her.*]

Cecily. [*Drawing back.*] A moment, Ernest! May I ask you—are you engaged to be married to this young lady?

Algernon. [*Looking round.*] To what young lady? Good heavens! Gwendolen!

Cecily. Yes: to good heavens, Gwendolen, I mean to Gwendolen.

Algernon. [*Laughing.*] Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

Cecily. Thank you. [*Presenting her cheek to be kissed.*] You may.

[*ALGERNON kisses her.*]

Gwendolen. I felt there was some slight error, Miss Cardew. The gentleman who is now embracing you is my cousin, Mr Algernon Moncrieff.

Cecily. [*Breaking away from ALGERNON.*] Algernon Moncrieff! Oh!

[*The two girls move towards each other and put their arms round each other's waists as if for protection.*]

Cecily. Are you called Algernon?

Algernon. I cannot deny it.

Cecily. Oh!

Gwendolen. Is your name really John?

Jack. [*Standing rather proudly.*] I could deny it if I liked. I could deny anything if I liked. But my name certainly is John. It has been John for years.

Cecily. [*To GWENDOLEN.*] A gross deception has been practised on both of us.

Gwendolen. My poor wounded Cecily!

Cecily. My sweet wronged Gwendolen!

Gwendolen. [*Slowly and seriously.*] You will call me sister, will you not?

[*They embrace. JACK and ALGERNON groan and walk up and down.*]

Cecily. [*Rather brightly.*] There is just one question I would like to be allowed to ask my guardian.

Gwendolen. An admirable idea! Mr Worthing, there is just one question I would like to be permitted to put to you. Where is your brother Ernest? We are both engaged to be married to your brother Ernest, so it is a matter of some importance to us to know where your brother Ernest is at present.

Jack. [*Slowly and hesitatingly.*] Gwendolen—Cecily—it is very painful for me to be forced to speak the truth. It is the first time in my life that I have ever been reduced to such a painful position, and I am really quite inexperienced in doing anything of the kind. However, I will tell you quite frankly that I have no brother Ernest. I have no brother at all. I never had a brother in my life, and I certainly have not the smallest intention of ever having one in the future.

Cecily. [*Surprised.*] No brother at all?

Jack. [*Cheerily.*] None!

Gwendolen. [*Severely.*] Had you never a brother of any kind?

Jack. [*Pleasantly.*] Never. Not even of any kind.

Gwendolen. I am afraid it is quite clear, Cecily, that neither of us is engaged to be married to anyone.

Cecily. It is not a very pleasant position for a young girl suddenly to find herself in. Is it?

Gwendolen. Let us go into the house. They will hardly venture to come after us there.

Cecily. No, men are so cowardly, aren't they?

[*They retire into the house with scornful looks.*]

Jack. This ghastly state of things is what you call Bunburying, I suppose?

Algernon. Yes, and a perfectly wonderful Bunbury it is. The most wonderful Bunbury I have ever had in my life.

Jack. Well, you've no right whatsoever to Bunbury here.

Algernon. That is absurd. One has a right to Bunbury anywhere one chooses. Every serious Bunburyist knows that.

Jack. Serious Bunburyist? Good heavens!

Algernon. Well, one must be serious about something, if one wants to have any amusement in life. I happen to be serious about

Bunburying. What on earth you are serious about I haven't got the remotest idea. About everything, I should fancy. You have such an absolutely trivial nature.

Jack. Well, the only small satisfaction I have in the whole of this wretched business is that your friend Bunbury is quite exploded. You won't be able to run down to the country quite so often as you used to do, dear Algy. And a very good thing too.

Algernon. Your brother is a little off colour, isn't he, dear Jack? You won't be able to disappear to London quite so frequently as your wicked custom was. And not a bad thing either.

Jack. As for your conduct towards Miss Cardew, I must say that your taking in a sweet, simple, innocent girl like that is quite inexcusable. To say nothing of the fact that she is my ward.

Algernon. I can see no possible defence at all for your deceiving a brilliant, clever, thoroughly experienced young lady like Miss Fairfax. To say nothing of the fact that she is my cousin.

Jack. I wanted to be engaged to Gwendolen, that is all. I love her.

Algernon. Well, I simply wanted to be engaged to Cecily. I adore her.

Jack. There is certainly no chance of your marrying Miss Cardew.

Algernon. I don't think there is much likelihood, Jack, of you and Miss Fairfax being united.

Jack. Well, that is no business of yours.

Algernon. If it was my business, I wouldn't talk about it. [*Begins to eat muffins.*] It is very vulgar to talk about one's business. Only people like stockbrokers do that, and then merely at dinner parties.

Jack. How you can sit there, calmly eating muffins when we are in this horrible trouble, I can't make out. You seem to me to be perfectly heartless.

Algernon. Well, I can't eat muffins in an agitated manner. The butter would probably get on my cuffs. One should always eat muffins quite calmly. It is the only way to eat them.

Jack. I say it's perfectly heartless your eating muffins at all, under the circumstances.

Algernon. When I am in trouble, eating is the only thing that consoles me. Indeed, when I am in really great trouble, as any one who knows me intimately will tell you, I refuse everything except food and drink. At the present moment I am eating muffins because I am unhappy. Besides, I am particularly fond of muffins. [*Rising.*]

Jack. [*Rising.*] Well, there is no reason why you should eat them all in that greedy way. [*Takes muffins from ALGERNON.*]

Algernon. [*Offering tea-cake.*] I wish you would have tea-cake instead. I don't like tea-cake.

Jack. Good heavens! I suppose a man may eat his own muffins in his own garden.

Algernon. But you have just said it was perfectly heartless to eat muffins.

Jack. I said it was perfectly heartless of you, under the circumstances. That is a very different thing.

Algernon. That may be. But the muffins are the same.

[*He seizes the muffin-dish from JACK.*]

Jack. Algy, I wish to goodness you would go.

Algernon. You can't possibly ask me to go without having some dinner. It's absurd. I never go without my dinner. No one ever does, except vegetarians and people like that. Besides I have just made arrangements with Dr Chasuble to be christened at a quarter to six under the name of Ernest.

Jack. My dear fellow, the sooner you give up that nonsense the better. I made arrangements this morning with Dr Chasuble to be christened myself at 5.30, and I naturally will take the name of Ernest. Gwendolen would wish it. We can't both be christened Ernest. It's absurd. Besides, I have a perfect right to be christened if I like. There is no evidence at all that I have ever been christened by anybody. I should think it extremely probable I never was, and so does Dr Chasuble. It is entirely different in your case. You have been christened already.

Algernon. Yes, but I have not been christened for years.

Jack. Yes, but you have been christened. That is the important thing.

Algernon. Quite so. So I know my constitution can stand it. If you are not quite sure about your ever having been christened, I must say I think it rather dangerous your venturing on it now. It might make you very unwell. You can hardly have forgotten that someone very closely connected with you was very nearly carried off this week in Paris by a severe chill.

Jack. Yes, but you said yourself that a severe chill was not hereditary.

Algernon. It usen't to be, I know—but I daresay it is now. Science is always making wonderful improvements in things.

Jack. [*Picking up the muffin-dish.*] Oh, that is nonsense; you are always talking nonsense.

Algernon. Jack, you are at the muffins

again! I wish you wouldn't. There are only two left. [*Takes them.*] I told you I was particularly fond of muffins.

Jack. But I hate tea-cake.

Algernon. Why on earth then do you allow tea-cake to be served up for your guests? What ideas you have of hospitality!

Jack. Algernon! I have already told you to go. I don't want you here. Why don't you go!

Algernon. I haven't quite finished my tea yet! and there is still one muffin left.

[*JACK groans, and sinks into a chair.*
ALGERNON continues eating.]

CURTAIN

THIRD ACT

Drawing-room at the Manor House.

[*GWENDOLEN and CECILY are at the window, looking out into the garden.*]

Gwendolen. The fact that they did not follow us at once into the house, as any one else would have done, seems to me to show that they have some sense of shame left.

Cecily. They have been eating muffins. That looks like repentance.

Gwendolen. [*After a pause.*] They don't seem to notice us at all. Couldn't you cough?

Cecily. But I haven't got a cough.

Gwendolen. They're looking at us. What effrontery!

Cecily. They're approaching. That's very forward of them.

Gwendolen. Let us preserve a dignified silence.

Cecily. Certainly. It's the only thing to do now.

[*Enter JACK followed by ALGERNON. They whistle some dreadful popular air from a British Opera.*]

Gwendolen. This dignified silence seems to produce an unpleasant effect.

Cecily. A most distasteful one.

Gwendolen. But we will not be the first to speak.

Cecily. Certainly not.

Gwendolen. Mr Worthing, I have something very particular to ask you. Much depends on your reply.

Cecily. Gwendolen, your common sense is invaluable. Mr Moncrieff, kindly answer me the following question. Why did you pretend to be my guardian's brother?

Algernon. In order that I might have an opportunity of meeting you.

Cecily. [*To GWENDOLEN.*] That certainly seems a satisfactory explanation, does it not?

Gwendolen. Yes, dear, if you can believe him.

Cecily. I don't. But that does not affect the wonderful beauty of his answer.

Gwendolen. True. In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing. Mr Worthing, what explanation can you offer to me for pretending to have a brother? Was it in order that you might have an opportunity of coming up to town to see me as often as possible?

Jack. Can you doubt it, Miss Fairfax?

Gwendolen. I have the gravest doubts upon the subject. But I intend to crush them. This is not the moment for German scepticism. [*Moving to CECILY.*] Their explanations appear to be quite satisfactory, especially Mr Worthing's. That seems to me to have the stamp of truth upon it.

Cecily. I am more than content with what Mr Moncrieff said. His voice alone inspires one with absolute credulity.

Gwendolen. Then you think we should forgive them?

Cecily. Yes. I mean no.

Gwendolen. True! I had forgotten. There are principles at stake that one cannot surrender. Which of us should tell them? The task is not a pleasant one.

Cecily. Could we not both speak at the same time?

Gwendolen. An excellent idea! I nearly always speak at the same time as other people. Will you take the time from me?

Cecily. Certainly.

[*GWENDOLEN beats time with uplifted finger.*]

Gwendolen and Cecily. [*Speaking together.*] Your Christian names are still an insuperable barrier. That is all!

Jack and Algernon. [*Speaking together.*] Our Christian names! Is that all? But we are going to be christened this afternoon.

Gwendolen. [*To JACK.*] For my sake you are prepared to do this terrible thing?

Jack. I am.

Cecily. [*To ALGERNON.*] To please me you are ready to face this fearful ordeal?

Algernon. I am!

Gwendolen. How absurd to talk of the equality of the sexes! Where questions of self-sacrifice are concerned, men are infinitely beyond us.

Jack. We are.

[*Clasps hands with ALGERNON.*]

Cecily. They have moments of physical courage of which we women know absolutely nothing.

Gwendolen. [*To JACK.*] Darling!

Algernon. [*To CECILY.*] Darling!

[*They fall into each other's arms.*]

[*Enter MERRIMAN. When he enters he coughs loudly, seeing the situation.*]

Merriman. Ahem! Ahem! Lady Bracknell.

Jack. Good heavens!

[*Enter LADY BRACKNELL. The couples separate in alarm. Exit MERRIMAN.*]

Lady Bracknell. Gwendolen! What does this mean?

Gwendolen. Merely that I am engaged to be married to Mr Worthing, mamma.

Lady Bracknell. Come here. Sit down. Sit down immediately. Hesitation of any kind is a sign of mental decay in the young, of physical weakness in the old. [*Turns to JACK.*] Apprised, sir, of my daughter's sudden flight by her trusty maid, whose confidence I purchased by means of a small coin, I followed her at once by a luggage train. Her unhappy father is, I am glad to say, under the impression that she is attending a more than usually lengthy lecture by the University Extension Scheme on the Influence of a Permanent Income on Thought. I do not propose to undeceive him. Indeed I have never undeceived him on any question. I would consider it wrong. But of course, you will clearly understand that all communication between yourself and my daughter must cease immediately from this moment. On this point, as indeed on all points, I am firm.

Jack. I am engaged to be married to Gwendolen, Lady Bracknell!

Lady Bracknell. You are nothing of the kind, sir. And now as regards Algernon! . . . Algernon!

Algernon. Yes, Aunt Augusta.

Lady Bracknell. May I ask if it is in this house that your invalid friend Mr Bunbury resides?

Algernon. [*Stammering.*] Oh! No! Bunbury doesn't live here. Bunbury is somewhere else at present. In fact, Bunbury is dead.

Lady Bracknell. Dead! When did Mr Bunbury die? His death must have been extremely sudden.

Algernon. [*Airily.*] Oh! I killed Bunbury

this afternoon. I mean poor Bunbury died this afternoon.

Lady Bracknell. What did he die of?

Algernon. Bunbury? Oh, he was quite exploded.

Lady Bracknell. Exploded! Was he the victim of a revolutionary outrage? I was not aware that Mr Bunbury was interested in social legislation. If so, he is well punished for his morbidity.

Algernon. My dear Aunt Augusta, I mean he was found out! The doctors found out that Bunbury could not live, that is what I mean—so Bunbury died.

Lady Bracknell. He seems to have had great confidence in the opinion of his physicians. I am glad, however, that he made up his mind at the last to some definite course of action, and acted under proper medical advice. And now that we have finally got rid of this Mr Bunbury, may I ask, Mr Worthing, who is that young person whose hand my nephew Algernon is now holding in what seems to me a peculiarly unnecessary manner?

Jack. That lady is Miss Cecily Cardew, my ward.

[*LADY BRACKNELL bows coldly to CECILY.*]

Algernon. I am engaged to be married to Cecily, Aunt Augusta.

Lady Bracknell. I beg your pardon?

Cecily. Mr Moncrieff and I are engaged to be married, Lady Bracknell.

Lady Bracknell. [*With a shiver, crossing to the sofa and sitting down.*] I do not know whether there is anything peculiarly exciting in the air of this particular part of Hertfordshire, but the number of engagements that go on seems to me considerably above the proper average that statistics have laid down for our guidance. I think some preliminary inquiry on my part would not be out of place. Mr Worthing, is Miss Cardew at all connected with any of the larger railway stations in London? I merely desire information. Until yesterday I had no idea that there were any families or persons whose origin was a Terminus.

[*JACK looks perfectly furious, but restrains himself.*]

Jack. [*In a cold, clear voice.*] Miss Cardew is the granddaughter of the late Mr Thomas Cardew of 149 Belgrave Square, S.W.; Gervase Park, Dorking, Surrey; and the Spornan, Fifeshire, North Britain.

Lady Bracknell. That sounds not unsatisfactory. Three addresses always inspire confidence, even in tradesmen. But what proof have I of their authenticity?

Jack. I have carefully preserved the Court Guides of the period. They are open to your inspection, Lady Bracknell.

Lady Bracknell. [*Grimly.*] I have known strange errors in that publication.

Jack. Miss Cardew's family solicitors are Messrs Markby, Markby, and Markby.

Lady Bracknell. Markby, Markby, and Markby? A firm of the very highest position in their profession. Indeed I am told that one of the Mr Markbys is occasionally to be seen at dinner parties. So far I am satisfied.

Jack. [*Very irritably.*] How extremely kind of you, Lady Bracknell! I have also in my possession, you will be pleased to hear, certificates of Miss Cardew's birth, baptism, whooping cough, registration, vaccination, confirmation, and the measles; both the German and the English variety.

Lady Bracknell. Ah! A life crowded with incident, I see; though perhaps somewhat too exciting for a young girl. I am not myself in favour of premature experiences. [*Rises, looks at her watch.*] Gwendolen! the time approaches for our departure. We have not a moment to lose. As a matter of form, Mr Worthing, I had better ask you if Miss Cardew has any little fortune?

Jack. Oh! about a hundred and thirty thousand pounds in the Funds. That is all. Good-bye, Lady Bracknell. So pleased to have seen you.

Lady Bracknell. [*Sitting down again.*] A moment, Mr Worthing. A hundred and thirty thousand pounds! And in the Funds! Miss Cardew seems to me a most attractive young lady, now that I look at her. Few girls of the present day have any really solid qualities, any of the qualities that last, and improve with time. We live, I regret to say, in an age of surfaces. [*To CECILY.*] Come over here, dear. [*CECILY goes across.*] Pretty child! your dress is sadly simple, and your hair seems almost as Nature might have left it. But we can soon alter all that. A thoroughly experienced French maid produces a really marvellous result in a very brief space of time. I remember recommending one to young Lady Lancing, and after three months her own husband did not know her.

Jack. And after six months nobody knew her.

Lady Bracknell. [*Glares at JACK for a few moments. Then bends, with a practised smile, to CECILY.*] Kindly turn round, sweet child. [*CECILY turns completely round.*] No, the side view is what I want. [*CECILY presents her profile.*] Yes, quite as I expected. There are distinct social possibilities in your profile. The two weak points in our age are

its want of principle and its want of profile. The chin a little higher, dear. Style largely depends on the way the chin is worn. They are worn very high, just at present. Algernon!

Algernon. Yes, Aunt Augusta!

Lady Bracknell. There are distinct social possibilities in Miss Cardew's profile.

Algernon. Cecily is the sweetest, dearest, prettiest girl in the whole world. And I don't care twopence about social possibilities.

Lack Bracknell. Never speak disrespectfully of Society, Algernon. Only people who can't get into it do that. [*To CECILY.*] Dear child, of course you know that Algernon has nothing but his debts to depend upon. But I do not approve of mercenary marriages. When I married Lord Bracknell I had no fortune of any kind. But I never dreamed for a moment of allowing that to stand in my way. Well, I suppose I must give my consent.

Algernon. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

Lady Bracknell. Cecily, you may kiss me!

Cecily. [*Kisses her.*] Thank you, Lady Bracknell.

Lady Bracknell. You may also address me as Aunt Augusta for the future.

Cecily. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

Lady Bracknell. The marriage, I think, had better take place quite soon.

Algernon. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

Cecily. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

Lady Bracknell. To speak frankly, I am not in favour of long engagements. They give people the opportunity of finding out each other's character before marriage, which I think is never advisable.

Jack. I beg your pardon for interrupting you, Lady Bracknell, but this engagement is quite out of the question. I am Miss Cardew's guardian, and she cannot marry without my consent until she comes of age. That consent I absolutely decline to give.

Lady Bracknell. Upon what grounds, may I ask? Algernon is an extremely, I may almost say an ostentatiously, eligible young man. He has nothing, but he looks everything. What more can one desire?

Jack. It pains me very much to have to speak frankly to you, Lady Bracknell, about your nephew, but the fact is that I do not approve at all of his moral character. I suspect him of being untruthful.

[ALGERNON AND CECILY look at him in indignant amazement.]

Lady Bracknell. Untruthful! My nephew Algernon? Impossible! He is an Oxonian.

Jack. I fear there can be no possible doubt about the matter. This afternoon during my temporary absence in London on an

important question of romance, he obtained admission to my house by means of the false pretence of being my brother. Under an assumed name he drank, I've just been informed by my butler, an entire pint bottle of my Perrier-Jouet, Brut, '89; wine I was specially reserving for myself. Continuing his disgraceful deception, he succeeded in the course of the afternoon in alienating the affections of my only ward. He subsequently stayed to tea, and devoured every single muffin. And what makes his conduct all the more heartless is that he was perfectly well aware from the first that I have no brother, that I never had a brother, and that I don't intend to have a brother, not even of any kind. I distinctly told him so myself yesterday afternoon.

Lady Bracknell. Ahem! Mr Worthing, after careful consideration I have decided entirely to overlook my nephew's conduct to you.

Jack. That is very generous of you, Lady Bracknell. My own decision, however, is unalterable. I decline to give my consent.

Lady Bracknell. [*To CECILY.*] Come here, sweet child. [*CECILY goes over.*] How old are you, dear?

Cecily. Well, I am really only eighteen, but I always admit to twenty when I go to evening parties.

Lady Bracknell. You are perfectly right in making some slight alteration. Indeed, no woman should ever be quite accurate about her age. It looks so calculating. . . . [*In a meditative manner.*] Eighteen, but admitting to twenty at evening parties. Well, it will not be very long before you are of age and free from the restraints of tutelage. So I don't think your guardian's consent is, after all, a matter of any importance.

Jack. Pray excuse me, Lady Bracknell, for interrupting you again, but it is only fair to tell you that according to the terms of her grandfather's will Miss Cardew does not come legally of age till she is thirty-five.

Lady Bracknell. That does not seem to me to be a grave objection. Thirty-five is a very attractive age. London society is full of women of the very highest birth who have, of their own free choice, remained thirty-five for years. Lady Dumbleton is an instance in point. To my own knowledge she has been thirty-five ever since she arrived at the age of forty, which was many years ago now. I see no reason why our dear Cecily should not be even still more attractive at the age you mention than she is at present. There will be a large accumulation of property.

Cecily. Algy, could you wait for me till I was thirty-five?

Algernon. Of course I could, Cecily. You know I could.

Cecily. Yes, I felt it instinctively, but I couldn't wait all that time. I hate waiting even five minutes for anybody. It always makes me rather cross. I am not punctual myself, I know, but I do like punctuality in others, and waiting, even to be married, is quite out of the question.

Algernon. Then what is to be done, Cecily?

Cecily. I don't know, Mr Moncrieff.

Lady Bracknell. My dear Mr Worthing, as Miss Cardew states positively that she cannot wait till she is thirty-five—a remark which I am bound to say seems to me to show a somewhat impatient nature—I would beg of you to reconsider your decision.

Jack. But my dear Lady Bracknell, the matter is entirely in your own hands. The moment you consent to my marriage with Gwendolen, I will most gladly allow your nephew to form an alliance with my ward.

Lady Bracknell. [*Pising and drawing herself up.*] You must be quite aware that what you propose is out of the question.

Jack. Then a passionate celibacy is all that any of us can look forward to.

Lady Bracknell. That is not the destiny I propose for Gwendolen. Algernon, of course, can choose for himself. [*Pulls out her watch.*] Come, dear, [*GWENDOLEN rises.*] we have already missed five, if not six, trains. To miss any more might expose us to comment on the platform.

[*Enter DR CHASUBLE.*]

Chasuble. Everything is quite ready for the christenings.

Lady Bracknell. The christenings, sir! Is not that somewhat premature?

Chasuble. [*Looking rather puzzled, and pointing to JACK and ALGERNON.*] Both these gentlemen have expressed a desire for immediate baptism.

Lady Bracknell. At their age? The idea is grotesque and irreligious! Algernon, I forbid you to be baptized. I will not hear of such excesses. Lord Bracknell would be highly displeased if he learned that that was the way in which you wasted your time and money.

Chasuble. Am I to understand then that there are to be no christenings at all this afternoon?

Jack. I don't think that, as things are now, it would be of much practical value to either of us, Dr Chasuble.

Chasuble. I am grieved to hear such sentiments from you, Mr Worthing. They savour of the heretical views of the Anabaptists, views that I have completely refuted in four

of my unpublished sermons. However, as your present mood seems to be one peculiarly secular, I will return to the church at once. Indeed, I have just been informed by the pew-opener that for the last hour and a half Miss Prism has been waiting for me in the vestry.

Lady Bracknell. [*Starting.*] Miss Prism! Did I hear you mention a Miss Prism?

Chasuble. Yes, Lady Bracknell. I am on my way to join her.

Lady Bracknell. Pray allow me to detain you for a moment. This matter may prove to be one of vital importance to Lord Bracknell and myself. Is this Miss Prism a female of repellent aspect, remotely connected with education?

Chasuble. [*Somewhat indignantly.*] She is the most cultivated of ladies, and the very picture of respectability.

Lady Bracknell. It is obviously the same person. May I ask what position she holds in your household?

Chasuble. [*Severely.*] I am a celibate, madam.

Jack. [*Interposing.*] Miss Prism, Lady Bracknell, has been for the last three years Miss Cardew's esteemed governess and valued companion.

Lady Bracknell. In spite of what I hear of her, I must see her at once. Let her be sent for.

Chasuble. [*Looking off.*] She approaches; she is nigh. [*Enter MISS PRISM hurriedly.*]

Miss Prism. I was told you expected me in the vestry, dear Canon. I have been waiting for you there for an hour and three-quarters.

[*Catches sight of LADY BRACKNELL, who has fixed her with a stony glare. MISS PRISM grows pale and quails. She looks anxiously round as if desirous to escape.*]

Lady Bracknell. [*In a severe, judicial voice.*] Prism! [*MISS PRISM bows her head in shame.*] Come here, Prism! [*MISS PRISM approaches in a humble manner.*] Prism! Where is that baby? [*General consternation. THE CANON starts back in horror. ALGERNON and JACK pretend to be anxious to shield CECILY and GWENDOLEN from hearing the details of a terrible public scandal.*] Twenty-eight years ago, Prism, you left Lord Bracknell's house, Number 104, Upper Grosvenor Square, in charge of a perambulator that contained a baby of the male sex. You never returned. A few weeks later, through the elaborate investigations of the Metropolitan police, the perambulator was discovered at midnight standing by itself in

a remote corner of Bayswater. It contained the manuscript of a three-volume novel of more than usually revolting sentimentality. [*MISS PRISM starts in involuntary indignation.*] But the baby was not there. [*Every one looks at MISS PRISM.*] Prism! Where is that baby? [*A pause.*]

Miss Prism. Lady Bracknell, I admit with shame that I do not know. I only wish I did. The plain facts of the case are these. On the morning of the day you mention, a day that is for ever branded on my memory, I prepared as usual to take the baby out in its perambulator. I had also with me a somewhat old, but capacious hand-bag in which I had intended to place the manuscript of a work of fiction that I had written during my few unoccupied hours. In a moment of mental abstraction, for which I can never forgive myself, I deposited the manuscript in the bassinette and placed the baby in the hand-bag.

Jack. [*Who has been listening attentively.*] But where did you deposit the hand-bag?

Miss Prism. Do not ask me, Mr Worthington.

Jack. Miss Prism, this is a matter of no small importance to me. I insist on knowing where you deposited the hand-bag that contained that infant.

Miss Prism. I left it in the cloak-room of one of the larger railway stations in London.

Jack. What railway station?

Miss Prism. [*Quite crushed.*] Victoria. The Brighton line. [*Sinks into a chair.*]

Jack. I must retire to my room for a moment. Gwendolen, wait here for me.

Gwendolen. If you are not too long, I will wait here for you all my life.

[*Exit JACK in great excitement.*]

Chasuble. What do you think this means, Lady Bracknell?

Lady Bracknell. I dare not even suspect, Dr Chasuble. I need hardly tell you that in families of high position strange coincidences are not supposed to occur. They are hardly considered the thing.

[*Noises heard overhead as if some one was throwing trunks about. Every one looks up.*]

Cecily. Uncle Jack seems strangely agitated.

Chasuble. Your guardian has a very emotional nature.

Lady Bracknell. This noise is extremely unpleasant. It sounds as if he was having an argument. I dislike arguments of any kind. They are always vulgar, and often convincing.

Chasuble. [*Looking up.*] It has stopped now.

[*The noise is redoubled.*]

Lady Bracknell. I wish he would arrive at some conclusion.

Gwendolen. This suspense is terrible. I hope it will last.

[*Enter JACK with a hand-bag of black leather in his hand.*]

Jack. [*Rushing over to MISS PRISM.*] Is this the hand-bag, Miss Prism? Examine it carefully before you speak. The happiness of more than one life depends on your answer.

Miss Prism. [*Calmly.*] It seems to be mine. Yes, here is the injury it received through the upsetting of a Gower Street omnibus in younger and happier days. Here is the stain on the lining caused by the explosion of a temperance beverage, an incident that occurred at Leamington. And here, on the lock, are my initials. I had forgotten that in an extravagant mood I had had them placed there. The bag is undoubtedly mine. I am delighted to have it so unexpectedly restored to me. It has been a great inconvenience being without it all these years.

Jack. [*In a pathetic voice.*] Miss Prism, more is restored to you than this hand-bag. I was the baby you placed in it.

Miss Prism. [*Amazed.*] You?

Jack. [*Embracing her.*] Yes . . . mother!

Miss Prism. [*Recoiling in indignant astonishment.*] Mr Worthing. I am unmarried!

Jack. Unmarried! I do not deny that is a serious blow. But after all, who has the right to cast a stone against one who has suffered? Cannot repentance wipe out an act of folly? Why should there be one law for men, and another for women? Mother, I forgive you. [*Tries to embrace her again.*]

Miss Prism. [*Still more indignant.*] Mr Worthing, there is some error. [*Pointing to LADY BRACKNELL.*] There is the lady who can tell you who you really are.

Jack. [*After a pause.*] Lady Bracknell, I hate to seem inquisitive, but would you kindly inform me who I am?

Lady Bracknell. I am afraid that the news I have to give you will not altogether please you. You are the son of my poor sister, Mrs Moncrieff, and consequently Algernon's elder brother.

Jack. Algyn's elder brother! Then I have a brother after all. I knew I had a brother! I always said I had a brother! Cecily—how could you have ever doubted that I had a brother? [*Seizes hold of ALGERNON.*] Dr Chasuble, my unfortunate brother. Miss

Prism, my unfortunate brother. Gwendolen, my unfortunate brother. Algyn, you young scoundrel, you will have to treat me with more respect in the future. You have never behaved to me like a brother in all your life.

Algernon. Well, not till to-day, old boy, I admit. I did my best, however, though I was out of practice. [*Shakes hands.*]

Gwendolen. [*To JACK.*] My own! But what own are you? What is your Christian name, now that you have become some one else?

Jack. Good heavens! . . . I had quite forgotten that point. Your decision on the subject of my name is irrevocable, I suppose?

Gwendolen. I never change, except in my affections.

Cecily. What a noble nature you have, Gwendolen!

Jack. Then the question had better be cleared up at once. Aunt Augusta, a moment. At the time when Miss Prism left me in the hand-bag, had I been christened already?

Lady Bracknell. Every luxury that money could buy, including christening, had been lavished on you by your fond and doting parents.

Jack. Then I was christened! That is settled. Now, what name was I given? Let me know the worst.

Lady Bracknell. Being the eldest son you were naturally christened after your father.

Jack. [*Irritably.*] Yes, but what was my father's Christian name?

Lady Bracknell. [*Meditatively.*] I cannot at the present moment recall what the General's Christian name was. But I have no doubt he had one. He was eccentric, I admit. But only in later years. And that was the result of the Indian climate, and marriage, and indigestion, and other things of that kind.

Jack. Algyn! Can't you recollect what our father's Christian name was?

Algernon. My dear boy, we were never even on speaking terms. He died before I was a year old.

Jack. His name would appear in the Army Lists of the period, I suppose, Aunt Augusta?

Lady Bracknell. The General was essentially a man of peace, except in his domestic life. But I have no doubt his name would appear in any military directory.

Jack. The Army Lists of the last forty years are here. These delightful records should have been my constant study. [*Rushes to bookcase and tears the books*

out.] M. Generals . . . Mallam, Maxbohm, Magley—what ghastly names they have—Markby, Migsby, Mobbs, Moncrieff! Lieutenant 1840, Captain, Lieutenant-Colonel, Colonel, General 1869, Christian names, Ernest John. [*Puts book very quietly down and speaks quite calmly.*] I always told you, Gwendolen, my name was Ernest, didn't I? Well, it is Ernest after all. I mean it naturally is Ernest.

Lady Bracknell. Yes, I remember now that the General was called Ernest. I knew I had some particular reason for disliking the name.

Gwendolen. Ernest! My own Ernest! I felt from the first that you could have no other name!

Jack. Gwendolen, it is a terrible thing for a man to find out suddenly that all his life

he has been speaking nothing but the truth. Can you forgive me?

Gwendolen. I can. For I feel that you are sure to change.

Jack. My own one!

Chasuble. [*To MISS PRISM.*] Laetitia! [*Embraces her.*]

Miss Prism. [*Enthusiastically.*] Frederick! At last!

Algernon. Cecily! [*Embraces her.*] At last!

Jack. Gwendolen! [*Embraces her.*] At last!

Lady Bracknell. My nephew, you seem to be displaying signs of triviality.

Jack. On the contrary, Aunt Augusta, I've now realized for the first time in my life the vital Importance of Being Earnest.

CURTAIN

UNCLE VANYA*

Scenes from Country Life

By

ANTON P. CHEKHOV

Translated by MARIAN FELL

CHEKHOV'S FEELING TOWARD THE THEATRE and playwriting was curious. He seems always to have felt distrust of them, in relation at least to his own work. Though he began writing plays as early as he began to write at all, he usually destroyed his work. As late as September, 1887, he wrote, "I will not write any play. I have absolutely no interest in the theatre, nor in humanity." But, persuaded by his friends, and by the opportunity for making money, he wrote *Ivanov*, his first full-length play, in two weeks during October, 1887. Then he had fits of nervousness lest the play should be inadequately mounted and acted. He could only with difficulty be persuaded that in performance it had been a marked success. These fears, the counterpart, no doubt, of the highest hopes, became habitual with him in regard to all his plays. By his short stories he had early won reputation, and he thought of his work in that form with more confidence, but he said, "The novel is a lawful wife, but the stage is a noisy, flashy, and insolent mistress."

Uncle Vanya, in its original form, was Chekhov's second full-length play. Planned by him in collaboration with A. S. Suvorin, who withdrew, it was entitled *The Wood Demon*, and occupied Chekhov from October, 1888, to October, 1889. He seems at first to have thought well of it, but, when it was not favorably received on performance, to have become quite discouraged. *The Wood Demon* was therefore not printed during his lifetime. But he seems to have kept the manuscript by him, and to have worked over it from time to time, so that in 1897, when an edition of his plays was being published, he decided to include with the already produced *Sea Gull* and *Ivanov* what he called "the universally

unknown *Uncle Vanya*." By means of this publication the play became known, and was frequently played in the provincial theatres of Russia during 1898, and by the Moscow Art Theatre in 1899.

The steps in the development of *Uncle Vanya* from synopsis through *The Wood Demon* to the form in which we now have it may be fairly easily traced, by reference to Chekhov's letters and the still extant early play. Through them it may be seen how consistently Chekhov moved toward economy and force: by elimination of unnecessary characters, by tautening emotion, by subtilizing action, by giving the whole an allegorical value. The early play has thirteen speaking characters, the revision only nine; in *The Wood Demon* the quarrel between the professor and his brother-in-law is broken into by the entrance of extraneous people, in *Uncle Vanya* it continues with rising tenseness to the attempted murder; and in *The Wood Demon* there is no parallel to the beautiful speech of Sonia which closes *Uncle Vanya*.

Chekhov wrote of his naturalistic technique: "The action goes on quietly and peacefully, and then I give the audience a blow. All my energy is spent on a few really brisk, forceful climaxes; but the bridges joining these are insignificant, loose, not startling."

Chekhov's repute as a playwright is indissolubly connected with the Moscow Art Theatre, and it with him. His plays failed—or seemed to him to fail—until the Moscow Art Theatre produced them. Stanislavsky, whose standing as the greatest twentieth-century director and teacher of actors rests on his work with the Moscow Art Theatre, learned, from his struggle to plumb the depths of Chekhov's plays, the power of trifles, the ways of extracting from slender hints the remoter yet more individual-

* Used by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

izing qualities of character. Yet Stanislavsky, if he had had his way in the beginning, would not have produced Chekhov.

The Moscow Art Theatre resulted from an eighteen-hour talk between Nemirovich-Danchenko, an established novelist and playwright, and Stanislavsky, a wealthy amateur of acting and directing, in the spring of 1897. They felt that the existing theatres of Russia, either state-subsidized or private-commercial, were not doing what ought to be done for theatrical art. Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko aimed, through the Moscow Art Theatre, to bring acting, directing, lighting, scenic design, movement, music, all the arts of the theatre, to the highest possible refinement. The division of labor between them was hazy, but as they phrased it at first, Stanislavsky was to have charge of form, Nemirovich-Danchenko of content. It was Nemirovich-Danchenko, therefore, who chose Chekhov's *The Sea Gull* for the Moscow Art Theatre and who kept Stanislavsky at the job of directing the play despite his early objections. But Stanislavsky soon came to like the quiet but profound Chekhov method, and remained one of the dramatist's devoted admirers and disciples during the six years Chekhov lived after the production of *The Sea Gull*.

Uncle Vanya was the second Chekhov play the Moscow Art Theatre produced. The Moscow Art Theatre is a repertory theatre; plays are not given in continuous run but at intervals during a season, as operas appear on the programs of opera houses. The company is a permanent company, not one organized for a single play. This organization, which compelled every member to make himself part of an ensemble but at the same time develop himself so as to bring the ensemble individually valuable qualities, created what during the first quarter of this century was undoubtedly the world's most distinguished acting company. And it was fitting that one of the four or five

greatest dramatists of the modern period should have contributed his finest plays to that theatre.

The movement to reorganize the theatre by redefining its aims and by freshening it with new talent appeared in Moscow, therefore, as it had earlier in Paris, in Berlin, in London. As Antoine in Paris had found new French playwrights and had brought Ibsen and Tolstoy to French attention, or Brahm in Berlin had given Hauptmann his start, or Grein in London had discovered Bernard Shaw's playwrighting ability, so in Moscow the Art Theatre, non-commercial like the others, brought Gorki into the theatre and gave Andreyev his first production. But the Moscow Art Theatre was also a theatre of the classics, and its audiences could be sure of presentations varied in age, mood, and manner. It was not committed, as other Free Theatres tended to be, to naturalism, though it inevitably felt and responded to the naturalistic tendencies of the age. It did not rely, as the other Free Theatres had to, upon the subscription method of financing, which tries to create a pledged and sympathetic audience in advance, and sometimes succeeds. The Moscow Art Theatre was financed in the early and difficult years by a millionaire patron, Morozov. Perhaps that is why it has outlasted all the other Free Theatres. It imposed upon its company and even upon its audience a discipline unmatched elsewhere in severity and dedication. Tardiness was forbidden either actor or patron; applause and curtain calls were not allowed; there was no interval music. But this discipline persists to this day, not only in Russia, but abroad, in the "Stanislavsky Method," which trains actors' minds, conscious and unconscious, as well as their bodies, to promote their creativity. This widely used method has been perhaps the most famous product of the combination of the Moscow Art Theatre and Chekhov.

ANTON PAVLOVITCH CHEKHOV

Born 1860, Taganrog, Russia.

M.D., University of Moscow, 1884.

1886, First volume of short stories published.

1888, Awarded Pushkin prize.

1898, Began association with the Moscow Art Theatre.

1904, Died of tuberculosis.

Journalist and short-story writer.

PLAYS

1884 *On the High Road* (one act, also translated as *On the Highway*). 1887 *Ivanov*. 1888 *The Tragedian in Spite of Himself* (one act, also translated as *An Unwilling Martyr*). 1888 *The Bear* (one act, also translated as *The Boor*). 1889 *The Wood Demon*. 1889 *That Worthless Fellow Platonov* (unfinished). 1889 *Tatyana Riepin* (one act, continuation of A. S. Suvorin's play of same name). 1889 *The Swan Song* (one act). 1889 *The Proposal* (one act, also translated as *A Marriage Proposal*). 1896 *The Sea Gull*. 1897 *Uncle Vanya* (revision of *The Wood Demon*). 1900 *The Three Sisters*. 1903 *The Jubilee* (one act, also translated as *The Anniversary*). 1903 *The Wedding* (one act). 1904 *The Cherry Orchard* (also translated as *The Cherry Garden*).

WRITINGS ON DRAMA

Chekhov wrote a good deal about the drama and theatre, but it is scattered through his letters. See *Letters on the Short Story, the Drama, and Other Literary Topics*, by Chekhov, edited by Louis S. Friedlander, 1924, especially pp. 113-202; *The Life and Letters of Anton Tchekhov*, edited by S. S. Koteliansky and Philip Tomlinson, n.d.; *Selected Letters of Anton Chekhov*, edited by Lillian Hellman, 1955.

UNCLE VANYA

Characters

ALEXANDER SEREBRAKOFF, *a retired professor.*
HELENA, *his wife, twenty-seven years old.*
SONIA, *his daughter by a former marriage.*
MME. VOITSKAYA, *widow of a privy councillor, and mother of Serebrakoff's first wife.*
IVAN (VANYA) (JEAN) VOITSKI, *her son.*

MICHAEL ASTROFF, *a doctor.*
ILIA (WAFFLES) TELEGIN, *an impoverished landowner.*
MARINA, *an old nurse.*
A WORKMAN.
The scene is laid on SEREBRAKOFF's country place.

ACT FIRST

A country house on a terrace. In front of it a garden. In an avenue of trees, under an old poplar, stands a table set for tea, with a samovar, etc. Some benches and chairs stand near the table. On one of them is lying a guitar. A hammock is swung near the table. It is three o'clock in the afternoon of a cloudy day.

[MARINA, a quiet, gray-haired, little old woman, is sitting at the table knitting a stocking. ASTROFF is walking up and down near her.]

Marina. [Pouring some tea into a glass.] Take a little tea, my son.

Astroff. [Takes the glass from her unwillingly.] Somehow, I don't seem to want any.

Marina. Then will you have a little vodka instead?

Astroff. No, I don't drink vodka every day, and besides, it is too hot now. [A pause.] Tell me, nurse, how long have we known each other?

Marina. [Thoughtfully.] Let me see, how long is it? Lord—help me to remember. You first came here, into our parts—let me think—when was it? Sonia's mother was still alive—it was two winters before she died; that was eleven years ago— [Thoughtfully.] perhaps more.

Astroff. Have I changed much since then?

Marina. Oh, yes. You were handsome and young then, and now you are an old man and not handsome any more. You drink, too.

Astroff. Yes, ten years have made me another man. And why? Because I am overworked. Nurse, I am on my feet from dawn till dusk. I know no rest; at night I tremble under my blankets for fear of being dragged

out to visit some one who is sick; I have toiled without repose or a day's freedom since I have known you; could I help growing old? And then, existence is tedious, anyway; it is a senseless, dirty business, this life, and goes heavily. Every one about here is silly, and after living with them for two or three years one grows silly oneself. It is inevitable. [Twisting his mustache.] See what a long mustache I have grown. A foolish, long mustache. Yes, I am as silly as the rest, nurse, but not as stupid; no, I have not grown stupid. Thank God, my brain is not addled yet, though my feelings have grown numb. I ask nothing, I need nothing, I love no one, unless it is yourself alone. [He kisses her head.] I had a nurse just like you when I was a child.

Marina. Don't you want a bite of something to eat?

Astroff. No. During the third week of Lent I went to the epidemic at Malitskoi. It was eruptive typhoid. The peasants were all lying side by side in their huts, and the calves and pigs were running about the floor among the sick. Such dirt there was, and smoke! Unspeakable! I slaved among these people all day, not a crumb passed my lips, but when I got home there was still no rest for me; a switchman was carried in from the railroad; I laid him on the operating table and he went and died in my arms under chloroform, and then my feelings that should have been deadened awoke again, my conscience tortured me as if I had killed the man. I sat down and closed my eyes—like this—and thought: will our descendants two hundred years from now, for whom we are breaking the road, remember to give us a

kind word? No, nurse, they will forget.

Marina. Man is forgetful, but God remembers.

Astroff. Thank you for that. You have spoken the truth.

[Enter VOITSKI from the house. He has been asleep after dinner and looks rather disheveled. He sits down on the bench and straightens his collar.]

Voitski. H'm. Yes. [A pause.] Yes.

Astroff. Have you been asleep?

Voitski. Yes, very much so. [He yawns.] Ever since the professor and his wife have come, our daily life seems to have jumped the track. I sleep at the wrong time, drink wine, and eat all sorts of messes for luncheon and dinner. It isn't wholesome. Sonia and I used to work together and never had an idle moment, but now Sonia works alone and I only eat and drink and sleep. Something is wrong.

Marina. [Shakes her head.] Such a confusion in the house! The professor gets up at twelve, the samovar is kept boiling all the morning, and everything has to wait for him. Before they came we used to have dinner at one o'clock, like everybody else, but now we have it at seven. The professor sits up all night writing and reading, and suddenly, at two o'clock, there goes the bell! Heavens, what is that? The professor wants some tea! Wake the servants, light the samovar! Lord, what disorder!

Astroff. Will they be here long?

Voitski. A hundred years! The professor has decided to make his home here.

Marina. Look at this now! The samovar has been on the table for two hours, and they are all out walking!

Voitski. All right, don't get excited; here they come.

[Voices are heard approaching. SEREBRAKOFF, HELENA, SONIA, and TELEGIN come in from the depths of the garden, returning from their walk.]

Serebrakoff. Superb! Superb! What beautiful views!

Telegin. They are wonderful, your Excellency.

Sonia. Tomorrow we shall go into the woods, shall we, papa?

Voitski. Ladies and gentlemen, tea is ready.

Serebrakoff. Won't you please be good enough to send my tea into the library? I still have some work to finish.

Sonia. I am sure you will love the woods.

[HELENA, SEREBRAKOFF, and SONIA go into the house. TELEGIN sits down at the table beside MARINA.]

Voitski. There goes our learned scholar on a hot, sultry day like this, in his overcoat and galoshes and carrying an umbrella!

Astroff. He is trying to take good care of his health.

Voitski. How lovely she is! How lovely! I have never in my life seen a more beautiful woman.

Telegin. Do you know, Marina, that as I walk in the fields or in the shady garden, as I look at this table here, my heart swells with unbounded happiness. The weather is enchanting, the birds are singing, we are all living in peace and contentment—what more could the soul desire? [Takes a glass of tea.]

Voitski. [Dreaming.] Such eyes—a glorious woman!

Astroff. Come, Ivan, tell us something.

Voitski. [Indolently.] What shall I tell you?

Astroff. Haven't you any news for us?

Voitski. No, it is all stale. I am just the same as usual, or perhaps worse, because I have become lazy. I don't do anything now but croak like an old raven. My mother, the old magpie, is still chattering about the emancipation of woman, with one eye on her grave and the other on her learned books, in which she is always looking for the dawn of a new life.

Astroff. And the professor?

Voitski. The professor sits in his library from morning till night, as usual—

"Straining the mind, wrinkling the brow,
We write, write, write,

Without respite

Or hope of praise in the future or now."¹ Poor paper! He ought to write his autobiography; he would make a really splendid subject for a book! Imagine it, the life of a retired professor, as stale as a piece of hard-tack, tortured by gout, headaches, and rheumatism, his liver bursting with jealousy and envy, living on the estate of his first wife, although he hates it, because he can't afford to live in town. He is everlastingly whining about his hard lot, though, as a matter of fact, he is extraordinarily lucky. He is the son of a common deacon and has attained the professor's chair, become the son-in-law of a senator, is called "your Excellency," and so on. But I'll tell you something; the man has been writing on art for twenty-five years, and he doesn't know the very first thing about it. For twenty-five years he has been chewing on other men's thoughts about realism, naturalism, and all such foolishness; for twenty-five years he has been reading and

¹ Quotation from Dmitriev (1794).

writing things that clever men have long known and stupid ones are not interested in; for twenty-five years he has been making his imaginary mountains out of molehills. And just think of the man's self-conceit and presumption all this time! For twenty-five years he has been masquerading in false clothes and has now retired, absolutely unknown to any living soul; and yet see him! Stalking across the earth like a demi-god!

Astroff. I believe you envy him.

Voitski. Yes, I do. Look at the success he has had with women! Don Juan himself was not more favored. His first wife, who was my sister, was a beautiful, gentle being, as pure as the blue heaven there above us, noble, great-hearted, with more admirers than he has pupils, and she loved him as only beings of angelic purity can love those who are as pure and beautiful as themselves. His mother-in-law, my mother, adores him to this day, and he still inspires a sort of worshipful awe in her. His second wife is, as you see, a brilliant beauty; she married him in his old age and has surrendered all the glory of her beauty and freedom to him. Why? What for?

Astroff. Is she faithful to him?

Voitski. Yes, unfortunately she is.

Astroff. Why "unfortunately"?

Voitski. Because such fidelity is false and unnatural, root and branch. It sounds well, but there is no logic in it. It is thought immoral for a woman to deceive an old husband whom she hates, but quite moral for her to strangle her poor youth in her breast and banish every vital desire from her heart.

Telegin. [*In a tearful voice.*] Vanya, I don't like to hear you talk so. Listen, Vanya; every one who betrays husband or wife is faithless, and could also betray his country.

Voitski. [*Crossly.*] Turn off the tap, Waffles.

Telegin. No, allow me, Vanya. My wife ran away with a lover on the day after our wedding, because my exterior was unprepossessing. I have never failed in my duty since then. I love her and am true to her to this day. I help her all I can and have given my fortune to educate the daughter of herself and her lover. I have forfeited my happiness, but I have kept my pride. And she? Her youth has fled, her beauty has faded according to the laws of nature, and her lover is dead. What has she kept?

[HELENA AND SONIA come in; after them comes MME. VOITSKAYA carrying a book. She sits down and begins to read. Some one hands her a glass of tea, which she drinks without looking up.]

Sonia. [*Hurriedly, to the NURSE.*] There are some peasants waiting out there. Go and see what they want. I shall pour the tea.

[*Pours out some glasses of tea.*]

[*MARINA goes out. HELENA takes a glass and sits drinking in the hammock.*]

Astroff. I have come to see your husband. You wrote me that he had rheumatism and I know not what else, and that he was very ill, but he appears to be as lively as a cricket.

Helena. He had a fit of the blues yesterday evening and complained of pains in his legs, but he seems all right again today.

Astroff. And I galloped over here twenty miles at breakneck speed! No matter, though, it is not the first time. Once here, however, I am going to stay until tomorrow, and at any rate sleep *quantum satis*.

Sonia. Oh, splendid! You so seldom spend the night with us. Have you had dinner yet?

Astroff. No.

Sonia. Good. So you will have it with us. We dine at seven now. [*Drinks her tea.*] This tea is cold!

Telegin. Yes, the samovar has grown cold.

Helena. Don't mind, Monsieur Ivan, we will drink cold tea, then.

Telegin. I beg your pardon, my name is not Ivan, but Ilia, ma'am—Ilia Telegin, or Waffles, as I am sometimes called an account of my pock-marked face. I am Sonia's godfather, and his Excellency, your husband, knows me very well. I now live with you, ma'am, on this estate, and perhaps you will be so good as to notice that I dine with you every day.

Sonia. He is our great help, our right-hand man. [*Tenderly.*] Dear godfather, let me pour you some tea.

Mme. Voitskaya. Oh! Oh!

Sonia. What is it, grandmother?

Mme. Voitskaya. I forgot to tell Alexander—I have lost my memory—I received a letter today from Paul Alexevitch in Khar-koff. He has sent me a new pamphlet.

Astroff. Is it interesting?

Mme. Voitskaya. Yes, but strange. He refutes the very theories which he defended seven years ago. It is appalling!

Voitski. There is nothing appalling about it. Drink your tea, mamma.

Mme. Voitskaya. It seems you never want to listen to what I have to say. Pardon me, Jean, but you have changed so in the last year that I hardly know you. You used to be a man of settled convictions and had an illuminating personality—

Voitski. Oh, yes. I had an illuminating personality, which illuminated no one. [*A pause.*] I had an illuminating personality!

You couldn't say anything more biting. I am forty-seven years old. Until last year I endeavored, as you do now, to blind my eyes by your pedantry to the truths of life. But now— Oh, if you only knew! If you knew how I lie awake at night, heartsick and angry, to think how stupidly I have wasted my time when I might have been winning from life everything which my old age now forbids.

Sonia. Uncle Vanya, how dreary!

Mme. Voitskaya. [To her SON.] You speak as if your former convictions were somehow to blame, but you yourself, not they, were at fault. You have forgotten that a conviction, in itself, is nothing but a dead letter. You should have done something.

Voitski. Done something! Not every man is capable of being a writer *perpetuum mobile* like your Herr Professor.

Mme. Voitskaya. What do you mean by that?

Sonia. [Imploringly.] Mother! Uncle Vanya! I entreat you!

Voitski. I am silent. I apologize and am silent.

[A pause.]

Helena. What a fine day! Not too hot.

[A pause.]

Voitski. A fine day to hang oneself.

[TELEGIN tunes the guitar. MARINA appears near the house, calling the chickens.]

Marina. Chick, chick, chick!

Sonia. What did the peasants want, nurse?

Marina. The same old thing, the same old nonsense. Chick, chick, chick!

Sonia. Why are you calling the chickens?

Marina. The speckled hen has disappeared with her chicks. I am afraid the crows have got her.

[TELEGIN plays a polka. All listen in silence. Enter WORKMAN.]

Workman. Is the doctor here? [To ASTROFF.] Excuse me, sir, but I have been sent to fetch you.

Astroff. Where are you from?

Workman. The factory.

Astroff. [Annoyed.] Thank you. There is nothing for it, then, but to go. [Looking around him for his cap.] Damn it, this is annoying!

Sonia. Yes, it is too bad, really. You must come back to dinner from the factory.

Astroff. No, I won't be able to do that. It will be too late. Now where, where— [To the WORKMAN.] Look here, my man, get me a glass of vodka, will you? [The WORKMAN goes out.] Where—where— [Finds his cap.] One of the characters in Ostroff's plays is a man with a long mustache and short wits, like me. However, let me bid you good-bye,

ladies and gentleman. [To HELENA.] I should be really delighted if you would come to see me some day with Miss Sonia. My estate is small, but if you are interested in such things I should like to show you a nursery and seed-bed whose like you will not find within a thousand miles of here. My place is surrounded by government forests. The forester is old and always ailing, so I superintend almost all the work myself.

Helena. I have always heard that you were very fond of the woods. Of course one can do a great deal of good by helping to preserve them, but does not that work interfere with your real calling?

Astroff. God alone knows what a man's real calling is.

Helena. And do you find it interesting?

Astroff. Yes, very.

Voitski. [Sarcastically.] Oh, extremely!

Helena. You are still young, not over thirty-six or seven, I should say, and I suspect that the woods do not interest you as much as you say they do. I should think you would find them monotonous.

Sonia. No, the work is thrilling. Dr. Astroff watches over the old woods and sets out new plantations every year, and he has already received a diploma and a bronze medal. If you will listen to what he can tell you, you will agree with him entirely. He says that forests are the ornaments of the earth, that they teach mankind to understand beauty and attune his mind to lofty sentiments. Forests temper a stern climate, and in countries where the climate is milder, less strength is wasted in the battle with nature, and the people are kind and gentle. The inhabitants of such countries are handsome, tractable, sensitive, graceful in speech and gesture. Their philosophy is joyous, art and science blossom among them, their treatment of women is full of exquisite nobility—

Voitski. [Laughing.] Bravo! Bravo! All that is very pretty, but it is also unconvincing. So my friend [To ASTROFF.], you must let me go on burning firewood in my stoves and building my sheds of planks.

Astroff. You can burn peat in your stoves and build your sheds of stone. Oh, I don't object, of course, to cutting wood from necessity, but why destroy the forests? The woods of Russia are trembling under the blows of the axe. Millions of trees have perished. The homes of the wild animals and birds have been desolated; the rivers are shrinking, and many beautiful landscapes are gone forever. And why? Because men are too lazy and stupid to stoop down and pick up their fuel from the ground. [To HELENA.]

Am I not right, Madame? Who but a stupid barbarian could burn so much beauty in his stove and destroy that which he cannot make? Man is endowed with reason and the power to create, so that he may increase that which has been given him, but until now he had not created, but demolished. The forests are disappearing, the rivers are running dry, the game is exterminated, the climate is spoiled, and the earth becomes poorer and uglier every day. [*To VOITSKI.*] I read irony in your eye; you do not take what I am saying seriously, and—and—after all, it may very well be nonsense. But when I pass peasant-forests that I have preserved from the axe, or hear the rustling of the young plantations set out with my own hands, I feel as if I had had some small share in improving the climate, and that if mankind is happy a thousand years from now I will have been a little bit responsible for their happiness. When I plant a little birch tree and then see it budding into young green and swaying in the wind, my heart swells with pride and I—[*Sees the WORKMAN, who is bringing him a glass of vodka on a tray.*] However—[*He drinks.*] I must be off. Probably it is all nonsense, anyway. Good-bye.

[*He goes toward the house. SONIA takes his arm and goes with him.*]

Sonia. When are you coming to see us again?

Astroff. I can't say.

Sonia. In a month?

[*ASTROFF and SONIA go into the house. HELENA and VOITSKI walk over to the terrace.*]

Helena. You have behaved shockingly again. Ivan, what sense was there in teasing your mother and talking about *perpetuum mobile*? And at breakfast you quarreled with Alexander again. Really, your behavior is too petty.

Voitski. But if I hate him?

Helena. You hate Alexander without reason; he is like every one else, and no worse than you are.

Voitski. If you could only see your face, your gestures! Oh, how tedious your life must be.

Helena. It is tedious, yes, and dreary! You all abuse my husband and look on me with compassion; you think, "Poor woman, she is married to an old man." How well I understand your compassion! As Astroff said just now, see how you thoughtlessly destroy the forests, so that there will soon be none left. So you also destroy mankind, and soon fidelity and purity and self-sacrifice will have vanished with the woods. Why cannot you look calmly at a woman unless she is yours? Because, the doctor was right, you are all possessed by a devil of destruction; you have no mercy on the woods or the birds or on women or on one another.

Voitski. I don't like your philosophy.

Helena. That doctor has a sensitive, weary face—an interesting face. Sonia evidently likes him, and she is in love with him, and I can understand it. This is the third time he has been here since I have come, and I have not had a real talk with him yet or made much of him. He thinks I am disagreeable. Do you know, Ivan, the reason you and I are such friends? I think it is because we are both lonely and unfortunate. Yes, unfortunate. Don't look at me in that way, I don't like it.

Voitski. How can I look at you otherwise when I love you? You are my joy, my life, and my youth. I know that my chances of being loved in return are infinitely small, do not exist, but I ask nothing of you. Only let me look at you, listen to your voice—

Helena. Hush, some one will overhear you.

[*They go toward the house.*]

Voitski. [*Following her.*] Let me speak to you of my love, do not drive me away, and this alone will be my greatest happiness!

Helena. Ah! This is agony!

[*TELEGIN strikes the strings of his guitar and plays a polka. MME. VOITSKAYA writes something on the leaves of her pamphlet.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT SECOND

The dining-room of SEREBRAKOFF'S house. [It is night. The tapping of the WATCHMAN'S rattle is heard in the garden. SEREBRAKOFF is dozing in an armchair by an open window and HELENA is sitting beside him, also half asleep.]

Serebrakoff. [*Rousing himself.*] Who is here? Is it you, Sonia?

Helena. It is I.

Serebrakoff. Oh, it is you, Nelly. This pain is intolerable.

Helena. Your shawl has slipped down.

[*She wraps up his legs in the shawl.*] Let me shut the window.

Serebrakoff. No, leave it open; I am suffocating. I dreamt just now that my left leg belonged to some one else, and it hurt so that I woke. I don't believe this is gout, it is more like rheumatism. What time is it?

Helena. Half-past twelve. [*A pause.*]

Serebrakoff. I want you to look for Batushka's works in the library tomorrow. I think we have him.

Helena. What is that?

Serebrakoff. Look for Batushka tomorrow morning; we used to have him, I remember. Why do I find it so hard to breathe?

Helena. You are tired; this is the second night you have had no sleep.

Serebrakoff. They say that Turgenieff got angina of the heart from gout. I am afraid I am getting angina too. Oh, damn this horrible, accursed old age! Ever since I have been old I have been hateful to myself, and I am sure, hateful to you all as well.

Helena. You speak as if we were to blame for your being old.

Serebrakoff. I am more hateful to you than to any one.

[*HELENA gets up and walks away from him, sitting down at a distance.*]

Serebrakoff. You are quite right, of course. I am not an idiot; I can understand you. You are young and healthy and beautiful, and longing for life, and I am an old dotard, almost a dead man already. Don't I know it? Of course I see that it is foolish for me to live so long, but wait! I shall soon set you all free. My life cannot drag on much longer.

Helena. You are overtaxing my powers of endurance. Be quiet, for God's sake!

Serebrakoff. It appears that, thanks to me, everybody's power of endurance is being overtaxed; everybody is miserable, only I am blissfully triumphant. Oh, yes, of course!

Helena. Be quiet! You are torturing me.

Serebrakoff. I torture everybody. Of course.

Helena. [*Weeping.*] This is unbearable! Tell me, what is it you want me to do?

Serebrakoff. Nothing.

Helena. Then be quiet, please.

Serebrakoff. It is funny that everybody listens to Ivan and his old idiot of a mother, but the moment I open my lips you all begin to feel ill-treated. You can't even stand the sound of my voice. Even if I am hateful, even if I am a selfish tyrant, haven't I the right to be one at my age? Haven't I deserved it? Haven't I, I ask you, the right to be respected, now that I am old?

Helena. No one is disputing your rights. [*The window slams in the wind.*] The wind is rising, I must shut the window. [*She shuts it.*] We shall have rain in a moment. Your rights have never been questioned by anybody.

[*The WATCHMAN in the garden sounds his rattle.*]

Serebrakoff. I have spent my life working in the interests of learning. I am used to my library and the lecture hall and to the esteem and admiration of my colleagues. Now I suddenly find myself plunged in this wilderness, condemned to see the same stupid people from morning till night and listen to their futile conversation. I want to live; I long for success and fame and the stir of the world, and here I am in exile! Oh, it is dreadful to spend every moment grieving for the lost past, to see the success of others and sit here with nothing to do but to fear death. I cannot stand it! It is more than I can bear. And you will not even forgive me for being old!

Helena. Wait, have patience; I shall be old myself in four or five years.

[*SONIA comes in.*]

Sonia. Father, you sent for Dr. Astroff, and now when he comes you refuse to see him. It is not nice to give a man so much trouble for nothing.

Serebrakoff. What do I care about your Astroff? He understands medicine about as well as I understand astronomy.

Sonia. We can't send for the whole medical faculty, can we, to treat your gout?

Serebrakoff. I won't talk to that madman!

Sonia. Do as you please. It's all the same to me. [*She sits down.*]

Serebrakoff. What time is it?

Helena. One o'clock.

Serebrakoff. It is stifling in here. Sonia, hand me that bottle on the table.

Sonia. Here it is.

[*She hands him a bottle of medicine.*]

Serebrakoff. [*Crossly.*] No, not that one! Can't you understand me? Can't I ask you to do a thing?

Sonia. Please don't be captious with me. Some people may like it, but you must spare me, if you please, because I don't. Besides, I haven't the time; we are cutting the hay tomorrow and I must get up early.

[*VOITSKI comes in dressed in a long gown and carrying a candle.*]

Voitski. A thunderstorm is coming up. [*The lightning flashes.*] There it is! Go to bed, Helena and Sonia. I have come to take your place.

Serebrakoff. [*Frightened.*] No, no, no!

Don't leave me alone with him! Oh, don't. He will begin to lecture me.

Voitski. But you must give them a little rest. They have not slept for two nights.

Serebrakoff. Then let them go to bed, but you go away too! Thank you. I implore you to go. For the sake of our former friendship do not protest against going. We will talk some other time—

Voitski. Our former friendship! Our former—

Sonia. Hush, Uncle Vanya!

Serebrakoff. [*To his WIFE.*] My darling, don't leave me alone with him. He will begin to lecture me.

Voitski. This is ridiculous.

[*MARINA comes in carrying a candle.*]

Sonia. You must go to bed, nurse, it is late.

Marina. I haven't cleared away the tea things. Can't go to bed yet.

Serebrakoff. No one can go to bed. They are all worn out, only I enjoy perfect happiness.

Marina. [*Goes up to SEREBRAKOFF and speaks tenderly.*] What's the matter, master? Does it hurt? My own legs are aching too, oh, so badly. [*Arranges his shawl about his legs.*] You have had this illness such a long time. Sonia's dead mother used to stay awake with you too, and wear herself out for you. She loved you dearly. [*A pause.*] Old people want to be pitied as much as young ones, but nobody cares about them, somehow. [*She kisses SEREBRAKOFF's shoulder.*] Come, master, let me give you some linden-tea and warm your poor feet for you. I shall pray to God for you.

Serebrakoff. [*Touched.*] Let us go, Marina.

Marina. My own feet are aching so badly, oh, so badly! [*She and SONIA lead SEREBRAKOFF out.*] Sonia's mother used to wear herself out with sorrow and weeping. You were still little and foolish then, Sonia. Come, come, master.

[*SEREBRAKOFF, SONIA, and MARINA go out.*]

Helena. I am absolutely exhausted by him, and can hardly stand.

Voitski. You are exhausted by him, and I am exhausted by my own self. I have not slept for three nights.

Helena. Something is wrong in this house. Your mother hates everything but her pamphlets and the professor; the professor is vexed, he won't trust me, and fears you; Sonia is angry with her father, and with me, and hasn't spoken to me for two weeks! I am at the end of my strength, and have come

near bursting into tears at least twenty times today. Something is wrong in this house.

Voitski. Leave speculating alone.

Helena. You are cultured and intelligent, Ivan, and you surely understand that the world is not destroyed by villains and conflagrations, but by hate and malice and all this spiteful tattling. It is your duty to make peace, and not to growl at everything.

Voitski. Help me first to make peace with myself. My darling! [*Seizes her hand.*]

Helena. Let go! [*She drags her hand away.*] Go away!

Voitski. Soon the rain will be over, and all nature will sigh and awake refreshed. Only I am not refreshed by the storm. Day and night the thought haunts me like a fiend, that my life is lost forever. My past does not count, because I frittered it away on trifles, and the present has so terribly miscarried! What shall I do with my life and my love? What is to become of them? This wonderful feeling of mine will be wasted and lost as a ray of sunlight is lost that falls into a dark chasm, and my life will go with it.

Helena. I am as it were benumbed when you speak to me of your love, and I don't know how to answer you. Forgive me, I have nothing to say to you. [*She tries to go out.*] Good night!

Voitski. [*Barring the way.*] If you only knew how I am tortured by the thought that beside me in this house is another life that is being lost forever—it is yours! What are you waiting for? What accursed philosophy stands in your way? Oh, understand, understand—

Helena. [*Looking at him intently.*] Ivan, you are drunk!

Voitski. Perhaps. Perhaps.

Helena. Where is the doctor?

Voitski. In there, spending the night with me. Perhaps I am drunk, perhaps I am; nothing is impossible.

Helena. Have you just been drinking together? Why do you do that?

Voitski. Because in that way I get a taste of life. Let me do it, Helena!

Helena. You never used to drink, and you never used to talk so much. Go to bed, I am tired of you.

Voitski. [*Falling on his knees before her.*] My sweetheart, my beautiful one—

Helena. [*Angrily.*] Leave me alone! Really, this has become too disagreeable.

[*HELENA goes out. A pause.*]

Voitski. [*Alone.*] She is gone! I met her first ten years ago, at her sister's house, when she was seventeen and I was thirty-seven. Why did I not fall in love with her then and

propose to her? It would have been so easy! And now she would have been my wife. Yes, we would both have been waked tonight by the thunderstorm, and she would have been frightened, but I would have held her in my arms and whispered: "Don't be afraid! I am here." Oh, enchanting dream, so sweet that I laugh to think of it. [*He laughs.*] But my God! My head reels! Why am I so old? Why won't she understand me? I hate all that rhetoric of hers, that morality of indolence, that absurd talk about the destruction of the world— [*A pause.*] Oh, how I have been deceived! For years I have worshipped that miserable gout-ridden professor. Sonia and I have squeezed this estate dry for his sake. We have bartered our butter and curds and peas like misers, and have never kept a morsel for ourselves, so that we could scrape enough pennies together to send to him. I was proud of him and of his learning; I received all his words and writings as inspired, and now? Now he has retired, and what is the total of his life? A blank! He is absolutely unknown, and his fame has burst like a soap-bubble. I have been deceived; I see that now, basely deceived.

[*ASTROFF comes in. He has his coat on, but is without his waistcoat or collar, and is slightly drunk. TELEGIN follows him, carrying a guitar.*]

Astroff. Play!

Telegin. But every one is asleep.

Astroff. Play!

[*TELEGIN begins to play softly.*]

Astroff. Are you alone here? No women about? [*Sings with his arms akimbo.*]

"The hut is cold, the fire is dead;

Where shall the master lay his head?"

The thunderstorm woke me. It was a heavy shower. What time is it?

Voitski. The devil only knows.

Astroff. I thought I heard Helena's voice.

Voitski. She was here a moment ago.

Astroff. What a beautiful woman! [*Looking at the medicine bottles on the table.*] Medicine, is it? What a variety we have; prescriptions from Moscow, from Kharkoff, from Tula! Why, he has been pestering all the towns of Russia with his gout! Is he ill, or simply shamming?

Voitski. He is really ill.

Astroff. What is the matter with you tonight? You seem sad. Is it because you are sorry for the professor?

Voitski. Leave me alone.

Astroff. Or in love with the professor's wife?

Voitski. She is my friend.

Astroff. Already?

Voitski. What do you mean by "already"?

Astroff. A woman can only become a man's friend after having first been his acquaintance and then his beloved—then she becomes his friend.

Voitski. What vulgar philosophy!

Astroff. What do you mean? Yes, I must confess I am getting vulgar, but then, you see, I am drunk. I usually only drink like this once a month. At such times my audacity and temerity know no bounds. I feel capable of anything. I attempt the most difficult operations and do them magnificently. The most brilliant plans for the future take shape in my head. I am no longer a poor fool of a doctor, but mankind's greatest benefactor. I evolve my own system of philosophy and all of you seem to crawl at my feet like so many insects or microbes. [*To TELEGIN.*] Play, Waffles!

Telegin. My dear boy, I would with all my heart, but do listen to reason; everybody in the house is asleep.

Astroff. Play! [*TELEGIN plays softly.*]

Astroff. I want a drink. Come, we still have some brandy left. And then, as soon as it is day, you will come home with me.

[*He sees SONIA, who comes in at that moment.*]

Astroff. I beg your pardon, I have no collar on.

[*He goes out quickly, followed by TELEGIN.*]

Sonia. Uncle Vanya, you and the doctor have been drinking! The good fellows have been getting together! It is all very well for him, he has always done it, but why do you follow his example? It looks dreadful at your age.

Voitski. Age has nothing to do with it. When real life is wanting one must create an illusion. It is better than nothing.

Sonia. Our hay is all cut and rotting in these daily rains, and here you are busy creating illusions! You have given up the farm altogether. I have done all the work alone until I am at the end of my strength— [*Frightened.*] Uncle! Your eyes are full of tears!

Voitski. Tears? Nonsense, there are no tears in my eyes. You looked at me then just as your dead mother used to, my darling — [*He eagerly kisses her face and hands.*] My sister, my dearest sister, where are you now? Ah, if you only knew, if you only knew!

Sonia. If she only knew what, Uncle?

Voitski. My heart is bursting. It is awful. No matter, though. I must go.

[*He goes out.*]

Sonia. [*Knocks at the door.*] Dr. Astroff! Are you awake? Please come here for a minute.

Astroff. [*Behind the door.*] In a moment.

[*He appears in a few seconds. He has put on his collar and waistcoat.*]

Astroff. What do you want?

Sonia. Drink as much as you please yourself, if you don't find it revolting, but I implore you not to let my uncle do it. It is bad for him.

Astroff. Very well; we won't drink any more. I am going home at once. That is settled. It will be dawn by the time the horses are harnessed.

Sonia. It is still raining; wait till morning.

Astroff. The storm is blowing over. This is only the edge of it. I must go. And please don't ask me to come and see your father any more. I tell him he has gout, and he says it is rheumatism. I tell him to lie down, and he sits up. Today he refused to see me at all.

Sonia. He has been spoilt. [*She looks in the sideboard.*] Won't you have a bite to eat?

Astroff. Yes, please. I believe I will.

Sonia. I love to eat at night. I am sure we shall find something in here. They say that he has made a great many conquests in his life, and that the women have spoiled him. Here is some cheese for you.

[*They stand eating by the sideboard.*]

Astroff. I haven't eaten anything today. Your father has a very difficult nature. [*He takes a bottle out of the sideboard.*] May I? [*He pours himself a glass of vodka.*] We are alone here, and I can speak frankly. Do you know, I could not stand living in this house for even a month? This atmosphere would stifle me. There is your father, entirely absorbed in his books, and his gout; there is your Uncle Vanya with his hypochondria, your grandmother, and finally, your stepmother—

Sonia. What about her?

Astroff. A human being should be entirely beautiful: the face, the clothes, the mind, the thoughts. Your step-mother is, of course, beautiful to look at, but don't you see? She does nothing but sleep and eat and walk and bewitch us, and that is all. She has no responsibilities, everything is done for her—am I not right? And an idle life can never be a pure one. [*A pause.*] However, I may be

judging her too severely. Like your Uncle Vanya, I am discontented, and so we are both grumblers.

Sonia. Aren't you satisfied with life?

Astroff. I like life as life, but I hate and despise it in a little Russian country village, and as far as my own personal life goes, by heaven! there is absolutely no redeeming feature about it. Haven't you noticed if you are riding through a dark wood at night and see a little light shining ahead, how you forget your fatigue and the darkness and the sharp twigs that whip your face? I work—that you know—as no one else in the country works. Fate beats me on without rest; at times I suffer unendurably and I see no light ahead. I have no hope; I do not like people. It is long since I have loved any one.

Sonia. You love no one?

Astroff. Not a soul. I only feel a sort of tenderness for your old nurse for old-times' sake. The peasants are all alike; they are stupid and live in dirt, and the educated people are hard to get along with. One gets tired of them. All our good friends are petty and shallow and see no farther than their own noses; in one word, they are dull. Those that have brains are hysterical, devoured with a mania for self-analysis. They whine, they hate, they pick faults everywhere with unhealthy sharpness. They sneak up to me sideways, look at me out of a corner of the eye, and say: "That man is a lunatic," "That man is a wind-bag." Or, if they don't know what else to label me with, they say I am strange. I like the woods; that is strange. I don't eat meat; that is strange, too. Simple, natural relations between man and man or man and nature do not exist.

[*He tries to go out; SONIA prevents him.*]

Sonia. I beg you, I implore you, not to drink any more!

Astroff. Why not?

Sonia. It is so unworthy of you. You are well-bred, your voice is sweet, you are even—more than any one I know—handsome. Why do you want to resemble the common people that drink and play cards? Oh, don't, I beg you! You always say that people do not create anything, but only destroy what heaven has given them. Why, oh, why, do you destroy yourself? Oh, don't, I implore you not to! I entreat you!

Astroff. [*Gives her his hand.*] I won't drink any more.

Sonia. Promise me.

Astroff. I give you my word of honor.

Sonia. [*Squeezing his hand.*] Thank you.

Astroff. I have done with it. You see, I

am perfectly sober again, and so I shall stay till the end of my life. [*He looks at his watch.*] But, as I was saying, life holds nothing for me; my race is run. I am old, I am tired, I am trivial; my sensibilities are dead. I could never attach myself to any one again. I love no one, and—never shall! Beauty alone has the power to touch me still. I am deeply moved by it. Helena could turn my head in a day if she wanted to, but that is not love, that is not affection—

[*He shudders and covers his face with his hands.*]

Sonia. What is it?

Astroff. Nothing. During Lent one of my patients died under chloroform.

Sonia. It is time to forget that. [*A pause.*] Tell me, doctor, if I had a friend or a younger sister, and if you knew that she, well—loved you, what would you do?

Astroff. [*Shrugging his shoulders.*] I don't know. I don't think I should do anything. I should make her understand that I could not return her love—however, my mind is not bothered about those things now. I must start at once if I am ever to get off. Good-bye, my dear girl. At this rate we shall stand here talking till morning. [*He shakes hands with her.*] I shall go out through the sitting-room, because I am afraid your uncle might detain me. [*He goes out.*]

Sonia. [*Alone.*] Not a word! His heart and soul are still locked from me, and yet for some reason I am strangely happy. I wonder why? [*She laughs with pleasure.*] I told him that he was well-bred and handsome and that his voice was sweet. Was that a mistake? I can still feel his voice vibrating in the air; it caresses me. [*Wringing her hands.*] Oh! how terrible it is to be plain! I am plain, I know it. As I came out of church last Sunday I overheard a woman say, "She is a dear, noble girl, but what a pity she is so ugly!" So ugly!

[*HELENA comes in and throws open the window.*]

Helena. The storm is over. What delicious air! [*A pause.*] Where is the doctor?

Sonia. He has gone. [*A pause.*]

Helena. Sonia!

Sonia. Yes?

Helena. How much longer are you going to sulk at me? We have not hurt each other. Why not be friends? We have had enough of this.

Sonia. I myself— [*She embraces HELENA.*] Let us make peace.

Helena. With all my heart.

[*They are both moved.*]

Sonia. Has papa gone to bed?

Helena. No, he is sitting up in the drawing-room. Heaven knows what reason you and I had for not speaking to each other for weeks. [*Sees the open sideboard.*] Who left the sideboard open?

Sonia. Dr. Astroff has just had supper.

Helena. There is some wine. Let us seal our friendship.

Sonia. Yes, let us.

Helena. Out of one glass. [*She fills a wine-glass.*] So, we are friends, are we?

Sonia. Yes. [*They drink and kiss each other.*] I have long wanted to make friends, but somehow, I was ashamed to.

[*She weeps.*]

Helena. Why are you crying?

Sonia. I don't know. It is nothing.

Helena. There, there, don't cry. [*She weeps.*] Silly! Now I am crying too. [*A pause.*] You are angry with me because I seem to have married your father for his money, but don't believe the gossip you hear. I swear to you I married him for love. I was fascinated by his fame and learning. I know now that it was not real love, but it seemed real at the time. I am innocent, and yet your clever, suspicious eyes have been punishing me for an imaginary crime ever since my marriage.

Sonia. Peace, peace! Let us forget the past.

Helena. You must not look so at people. It is not becoming to you. You must trust people, or life becomes impossible.

Sonia. Tell me truly, as a friend, are you happy?

Helena. Truly, no.

Sonia. I knew it. One more question: do you wish your husband were young?

Helena. What a child you are! Of course I do. Go on, ask something else.

Sonia. Do you like the doctor?

Helena. Yes, very much indeed.

Sonia. [*Laughing.*] I have a stupid face, haven't I? He has just gone out, and his voice is still in my ears; I hear his step; I see his face in the dark window. Let me say all I have in my heart! But no, I cannot speak of it so loudly. I am ashamed. Come to my room and let me tell you there. I seem foolish to you, don't I? Talk to me of him.

Helena. What can I say?

Sonia. He is clever. He can do everything. He can cure the sick, and plant woods.

Helena. It is not a question of medicine and woods, my dear; he is a man of genius. Do you know what that means? It means he is brave, profound, and of clear insight. He plants a tree and his mind travels a thousand

years into the future, and he sees visions of the happiness of the human race. People like him are rare and should be loved. What if he does drink and act roughly at times? A man of genius cannot be a saint in Russia. There he lives, cut off from the world by cold and storm and endless roads of bottomless mud, surrounded by a rough people who are crushed by poverty and disease, his life one continuous struggle, with never a day's respite; how can a man live like that for forty years and keep himself sober and unspotted? [*Kissing SONIA.*] I wish you happiness with all my heart; you deserve it. [*She gets up.*] As for me, I am a worthless, futile woman. I have always been futile; in music, in love, in my husband's house—in a word, in everything. When you come to think of it, Sonia, I am really very, very unhappy. [*Walks excitedly up and down.*] Happiness can never exist for me in this world. Never. Why do you laugh?

Sonia. [*Laughing and covering her face*

with her hands.] I am so happy, so happy! Helena. I want to hear music. I might play a little.

Sonia. Oh, do, do! [*She embraces her.*] I could not possibly go to sleep now. Do play!

Helena. Yes, I will. Your father is still awake. Music irritates him when he is ill, but if he says I may, then I shall play a little. Go, Sonia, and ask him.

Sonia. Very well.

[*She goes out. The WATCHMAN's rattle is heard in the garden.*]

Helena. It is long since I have heard music. And now, I shall sit and play, and weep like a fool. [*Speaking out of the window.*] Is that you rattling out there, Ephim?

Voice of the Watchman. It is I.

Helena. Don't make such a noise. Your master is ill.

Voice of the Watchman. I am going away this minute. [*Whistles a tune.*]

Sonia. [*Comes back.*] He says no.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT THIRD

The drawing-room of SEREBRAKOFF's house. [There are three doors: one to the right, one to the left, and one in the center of the room. VOITSKI and SONIA are sitting down. HELENA is walking up and down, absorbed in thought.]

Voitski. We were asked by the professor to be here at one o'clock. [*Looks at his watch.*] It is now a quarter to one. It seems he has some communication to make to the world.

Helena. Probably a matter of business.

Voitski. He never had any business. He writes twaddle, grumbles, and eats his heart out with jealousy; that's all he does.

Sonia. [*Reproachfully.*] Uncle!

Voitski. All right. I beg your pardon. [*He points to HELENA.*] Look at her. Wandering up and down from sheer idleness. A sweet picture, really.

Helena. I wonder you are not bored, droning on in the same key from morning till night. [*Despairingly.*] I am dying of this tedium. What shall I do?

Sonia. [*Shrugging her shoulders.*] There is plenty to do if you would.

Helena. For instance?

Sonia. You could help run this place,

teach the children, care for the sick—isn't that enough? Before you and papa came, Uncle Vanya and I used to go to market ourselves to deal in flour.

Helena. I don't know anything about such things, and besides, they don't interest me. It is only in novels that women go out and teach and heal the peasants; how can I suddenly begin to do it?

Sonia. How can you live here and not do it? Wait awhile, you will get used to it all. [*Embraces her.*] Don't be sad, dearest. [*Laughing.*] You feel miserable and restless, and can't seem to fit into this life, and your restlessness is catching. Look at Uncle Vanya, he does nothing now but haunt you like a shadow, and I have left my work to-day to come here and talk with you. I am getting lazy, and don't want to go on with it. Dr. Astroff hardly ever used to come here; it was all we could do to persuade him to visit us once a month, and now he has abandoned his forestry and his practice, and comes every day. You must be a witch.

Voitski. Why should you languish here? Come, my dearest, my beauty, be sensible! The blood of a nixie runs in your veins. Oh, won't you let yourself be one? Give your nature the reins for once in your life; fall

head over ears in love with some other water sprite and plunge down head first into a deep pool, so that the Herr Professor and all of us may have our hands free again.

Helena. [*Angrily.*] Leave me alone! How cruel you are! [*She tries to go out.*]

Voitski. [*Preventing her.*] There, there, my beauty, I apologize. [*He kisses her hand.*] Forgive me.

Helena. Confess that you would try the patience of an angel.

Voitski. As a peace offering I am going to fetch some flowers which I picked for you this morning: some autumn roses, beautiful, sorrowful roses. [*He goes out.*]

Sonia. Autumn roses, beautiful, sorrowful roses!

[*She and HELENA stand looking out of the window.*]

Helena. September already! How shall we live through the long winter here? [*A pause.*] Where is the doctor?

Sonia. He is writing in Uncle Vanya's room. I am glad Uncle Vanya has gone out, I want to talk to you about something.

Helena. About what?

Sonia. About what?

[*She lays her head on HELENA's breast.*]

Helena. [*Stroking her hair.*] There, there, that will do. Don't, Sonia.

Sonia. I am ugly!

Helena. You have lovely hair.

Sonia. Don't say that! [*She turns to look at herself in the glass.*] No, when a woman is ugly they always say she has beautiful hair or eyes. I have loved him now for six years; I have loved him more than one loves one's mother. I seem to hear him beside me every moment of the day. I feel the pressure of his hand on mine. If I look up, I seem to see him coming, and as you see, I run to you to talk of him. He is here every day now, but he never looks at me, he does not notice my presence. It is agony. I have absolutely no hope; no, no hope. Oh, my God! Give me strength to endure. I prayed all last night. I often go up to him and speak to him and look into his eyes. My pride is gone. I am not mistress of myself. Yesterday I told Uncle Vanya. I couldn't control myself, and all the servants know it. Every one knows that I love him.

Helena. Does he?

Sonia. No, he never notices me.

Helena. [*Thoughtfully.*] He is a strange man. Listen, Sonia, will you allow me to speak to him? I shall be careful, only hint. [*A pause.*] Really, to be in uncertainty all these years! Let me do it!

[*SONIA nods an affirmative.*]

Helena. Splendid! It will be easy to find out whether he loves you or not. Don't be ashamed, sweetheart, don't worry. I shall be careful; he will not notice a thing. We only want to find out whether it is yes or no, don't we? [*A pause.*] And if it is no, then he must keep away from here, is that so?

[*SONIA nods.*]

Helena. It will be easier not to see him any more. We won't put off the examination an instant. He said he had a sketch to show me. Go and tell him at once that I want to see him.

Sonia. [*In great excitement.*] Will you tell me the whole truth?

Helena. Of course I will. I am sure that no matter what it is, it will be easier for you to bear than this uncertainty. Trust to me, dearest.

Sonia. Yes, yes. I shall say that you want to see his sketch. [*She starts out, but stops near the door and looks back.*] No, it is better not to know—and yet—there may be hope.

Helena. What do you say?

Sonia. Nothing. [*She goes out.*]

Helena. [*Alone.*] There is no greater sorrow than to know another's secret when you cannot help them. [*In deep thought.*] He is obviously not in love with her, but why shouldn't he marry her? She is not pretty, but she is so clever and pure and good, she would make a splendid wife for a country doctor of his years. [*A pause.*] I can understand how the poor child feels. She lives here in this desperate loneliness with no one around her except these colorless shadows that go mooning about talking nonsense and knowing nothing except that they eat, drink, and sleep. Among them appears from time to time this Dr. Astroff, so different, so handsome, so interesting, so charming. It is like seeing the moon rise on a dark night. Oh, to surrender oneself to his embrace! To lose oneself in his arms! I am a little in love with him myself! Yes, I am lonely without him, and when I think of him I smile. That Uncle Vanya says I have the blood of a nixie in my veins: "Give rein to your nature for once in your life!" Perhaps it is right that I should. Oh, to be free as a bird, to fly away from all your sleepy faces and your talk and forget that you have existed at all! But I am a coward, I am afraid; my conscience torments me. He comes here every day now. I can guess why, and feel guilty already; I should like to fall on my knees at Sonia's feet and beg her forgiveness, and weep.

[*ASTROFF comes in carrying a portfolio.*]

Astroff. How do you do? [*Shakes hands*]

with her.] Do you want to see my sketch?

Helena. Yes, you promised to show me what you had been doing. Have you time now?

Astrov. Of course I have!

[*He lays the portfolio on the table, takes out the sketch and fastens it to the table with thumbtacks.*]

Astrov. Where were you born?

Helena. [*Helping him.*] In St. Petersburg.

Astrov. And educated?

Helena. At the Conservatory there.

Astrov. You don't find this life very interesting, I dare say?

Helena. Oh, why not? It is true I don't know the country very well, but I have read a great deal about it.

Astrov. I have my own desk there in Ivan's room. When I am absolutely too exhausted to go on I drop everything and rush over here to forget myself in this work for an hour or two. Ivan and Miss Sonia sit rattling at their counting-boards, the cricket chirps, and I sit beside them and paint, feeling warm and peaceful. But I don't permit myself this luxury very often, only once a month. [*Pointing to the picture.*] Look there! That is a map of our country as it was fifty years ago. The green tints, both dark and light, represent forests. Half the map, as you see, is covered with it. Where the green is striped with red the forests were inhabited by elk and wild goats. Here on this lake lived great flocks of swans and geese and ducks; as the old men say, there was a power of birds of every kind. Now they have vanished like a cloud. Beside the hamlets and villages, you see, I have dotted down here and there the various settlements, farms, hermit's caves, and water-mills. This country carried a great many cattle and horses, as you can see by the quantity of blue paint. For instance, see how thickly it lies in this part; there were great herds of them here, an average of three horses to every house. [*A pause.*] Now, look lower down. This is the country as it was twenty-five years ago. Only a third of the map is green now with forests. There are no goats left and no elk. The blue paint is lighter, and so on, and so on. Now we come to the third part; our country as it appears today. We still see spots of green, but not much. The elk, the swans, the black-cock have disappeared. It is, on the whole, the picture of a regular and slow decline which it will evidently only take about ten or fifteen more years to complete. You may perhaps object that it is the march of progress, that the old order must give place to the new, and you might be right if roads had been run

through these ruined woods, or if factories and schools had taken their place. The people then would have become better educated and healthier and richer, but as it is, we have nothing of the sort. We have the same swamps and mosquitoes; the same disease and want; the typhoid, the diphtheria, the burning villages. We are confronted by the degradation of our country, brought on by the fierce struggle for existence of the human race. It is the consequence of the ignorance and unconsciousness of starving, shivering, sick humanity that, to save its children, instinctively snatches at everything that can warm it and still its hunger. So it destroys everything it can lay its hands on, without a thought for the morrow. And almost everything has gone, and nothing has been created to take its place. [*Coldly.*] But I see by your face that I am not interesting you.

Helena. I know so little about such things!

Astrov. There is nothing to know. It simply isn't interesting, that's all.

Helena. Frankly, my thoughts were elsewhere. Forgive me! I want to submit you to a little examination, but I am embarrassed and don't know how to begin.

Astrov. An examination?

Helena. Yes, but quite an innocent one. Sit down. [*They sit down.*] It is about a certain young girl I know. Let us discuss it like honest people, like friends, and then forget what has passed between us, shall we?

Astrov. Very well.

Helena. It is about my step-daughter, Sonia. Do you like her?

Astrov. Yes, I respect her.

Helena. Do you like her—as a woman?

Astrov. [*Slowly.*] No.

Helena. One more word, and that will be the last. You have not noticed anything?

Astrov. No, nothing.

Helena. [*Taking his hand.*] You do not love her. I see that in your eyes. She is suffering. You must realize that, and not come here any more.

Astrov. My sun has set, yes; and then I haven't the time. [*Shrugging his shoulders.*] Where shall I find time for such things?

[*He is embarrassed.*]

Helena. Bah! What an unpleasant conversation! I am as out of breath as if I had been running three miles uphill. Thank heaven, that is over! Now let us forget everything as if nothing had been said. You are sensible. You understand. [*A pause.*] I am actually blushing.

Astrov. If you had spoken a month ago I might perhaps have considered it, but now—

[*He shrugs his shoulders.*] Of course, if she is suffering—but I cannot understand why you had to put me through this examination. [*He searches her face with his eyes, and shakes his finger at her.*] Oho, you are wily!

Helena. What does this mean?

Astroff. [*Laughing.*] You are a wily one! I admit that Sonia is suffering, but what does this examination of yours mean? [*He prevents her from retorting, and goes on quickly.*] Please don't put on such a look of surprise; you know perfectly well why I come here every day. Yes, you know perfectly why and for whose sake I come! Oh, my sweet tigress! don't look at me in that way! I am an old bird!

Helena. [*Perplexed.*] A tigress? I don't understand you.

Astroff. Beautiful, sleek tigress, you must have your victims! For a whole month I have done nothing but seek you eagerly. I have thrown over everything for you, and you love to see it. Now then, I am sure you knew all this without putting me through your examination. [*Crossing his arms and bowing his head.*] I surrender. Here you have me—now, eat me.

Helena. You have gone mad!

Astroff. You are afraid!

Helena. I am a better and stronger woman than you think me. Good-bye.

[*She tries to leave the room.*]

Astroff. Why good-bye? Don't say good-bye, don't waste words. Oh, how lovely you are—what hands! [*He kisses her hands.*]

Helena. Enough of this! [*She frees her hands.*] Leave the room! You have forgotten yourself.

Astroff. Tell me, tell me, where can we meet tomorrow? [*He puts his arm around her.*] Don't you see that we must meet, that it is inevitable?

[*He kisses her. VOITSKI comes in carrying a bunch of roses; and stops in the doorway.*]

Helena. [*Without seeing VOITSKI.*] Have pity! Leave me. [*Lays her head on ASTROFF'S shoulder.*] Don't!

[*She tries to break away from him.*]

Astroff. [*Holding her by the waist.*] Be in the forest tomorrow at two o'clock. Will you? Will you?

Helena. [*Sees VOITSKI.*] Let me go! [*Goes to the window, deeply embarrassed.*] This is appalling!

Voitski. [*Throws the flowers on a chair, and speaks in great excitement, wiping his face with his handkerchief.*] Nothing—yes, yes, nothing.

Astroff. The weather is fine today, my dear Ivan; the morning was overcast and looked like rain, but now the sun is shining again. Honestly, we have had a very fine autumn, and the wheat is looking fairly well. [*Puts his map back into the portfolio.*] But the days are growing short. [*Exit.*]

Helena. [*Goes quickly up to VOITSKI.*] You must do your best; you must use all your power to get my husband and myself away from here today! Do you hear? I say, this very day!

Voitski. [*Wiping his face.*] Oh! Ah! Oh! All right! I—Helena, I saw everything!

Helena. [*In great agitation.*] Do you hear me? I must leave here this very day.

[*SEREBRAKOFF, SONIA, MARINA, and TELEGIN come in.*]

Telegin. I am not very well myself, your Excellency. I have been limping for two days, and my head—

Serebrakoff. Where are the others? I hate this house. It is a regular labyrinth. Every one is always scattered through the twenty-six enormous rooms; one never can find a soul. [*Rings.*] Ask my wife and Madame Voitskaya to come here!

Helena. I am here already.

Serebrakoff. Please, all of you, sit down.

Sonia. [*Goes up to HELENA and asks anxiously.*] What did he say?

Helena. I'll tell you later.

Sonia. You are moved. [*Looking quickly and inquiringly into her face.*] I understand; he said he would not come here any more. [*A pause.*] Tell me, did he?

[*HELENA nods.*]

Serebrakoff. [*To TELEGIN.*] One can, after all, become reconciled to being an invalid, but not to this country life. The ways of it stick in my throat and I feel exactly as if I had been whirled off the earth and landed on a strange planet. Please be seated, ladies and gentlemen. Sonia! [*SONIA does not hear. She is standing with her head bowed sadly forward on her breast.*] Sonia! [*A pause.*] She does not hear me. [*To MARINA.*] Sit down too, nurse. [*MARINA sits down and begins to knit her stocking.*] I crave your indulgence, ladies and gentlemen; hang your ears, if I may say so, on the peg of attention.

[*He laughs.*]

Voitski. [*Agitated.*] Perhaps you do not need me—may I be excused?

Serebrakoff. No, you are needed now more than any one.

Voitski. What is it you want of me?

Serebrakoff. You—but what are you angry about? If it is anything I have done, I ask you to forgive me.

Voitski. Oh, drop that and come to business; what do you want?

[*MME. VOITSKAYA comes in.*]

Serebrakoff. Here is mother. Ladies and gentlemen, I shall begin. I have asked you to assemble here, my friends, in order to discuss a very important matter. I want to ask you for your assistance and advice, and knowing your unfailing amiability I think I can count on both. I am a book-worm and a scholar, and am unfamiliar with practical affairs. I cannot, I find, dispense with the help of well-informed people such as you, Ivan, and you, Telegin, and you, mother. The truth is, *manet omnes una nox*, that is to say, our lives are in the hands of God, and as I am old and ill, I realize that the time has come for me to dispose of my property in regard to the interests of my family. My life is nearly over, and I am not thinking of myself, but I have a young wife and daughter. [*A pause.*] I cannot continue to live in the country; we were not made for country life, and yet we cannot afford to live in town on the income derived from this estate. We might sell the woods, but that would be an expedient we could not resort to every year. We must find some means of guaranteeing to ourselves a certain more or less fixed yearly income. With this object in view, a plan has occurred to me which I now have the honor of presenting to you for your consideration. I shall only give you a rough outline, avoiding all details. Our estate does not pay on an average more than two per cent on the money invested in it. I propose to sell it. If we then invest our capital in bonds, it will earn us four to five per cent, and we should probably have a surplus over of several thousand roubles, with which we could buy a summer cottage in Finland—

Voitski. Hold on! Repeat what you just said; I don't think I heard you quite right.

Serebrakoff. I said we would invest the money in bonds and buy a cottage in Finland with the surplus.

Voitski. No, not Finland—you said something else.

Serebrakoff. I propose to sell this place.

Voitski. Aha! That was it! So you are going to sell the place? Splendid. The idea is a rich one. And what do you propose to do with my old mother and me and with Sonia here?

Serebrakoff. That will be decided in due time. We can't do everything at once.

Voitski. Wait! It is clear that until this moment I have never had a grain of sense in my head. I have always been stupid enough to think that the estate belonged to Sonia.

My father bought it as a wedding present for my sister, and I foolishly imagined that as our laws were made for Russians and not Turks, my sister's estate would come down to her child.

Serebrakoff. Of course it is Sonia's. Has any one denied it? I don't want to sell it without Sonia's consent; on the contrary, what I am doing is for Sonia's good.

Voitski. This is absolutely incomprehensible. Either I have gone mad or—or—

Mme. Voitskaya. Jean, don't contradict Alexander. Trust to him; he knows better than we do what is right and what is wrong.

Voitski. I shan't. Give me some water. [*He drinks.*] Go ahead! Say anything you please—anything!

Serebrakoff. I can't imagine why you are so upset. I don't pretend that my scheme is an ideal one, and if you all object to it I shall not insist. [*A pause.*]

Telegin. [*With embarrassment.*] I not only nourish feelings of respect toward learning, your Excellency, but I am also drawn to it by family ties. My brother Gregory's wife's brother, whom you may know; his name is Constantine Lakedemonoff, and he used to be a magistrate—

Voitski. Stop, Waffles. This is business; wait a bit, we will talk of that later. [*To SEREBRAKOFF.*] There now, ask him what he thinks; this estate was bought from his uncle.

Serebrakoff. Ah! Why should I ask questions? What good would it do?

Voitski. The price was ninety-five thousand roubles. My father paid seventy and left a debt of twenty-five. Now listen! This place could never have been bought had I not renounced my inheritance in favor of my sister, whom I deeply loved—and what is more, I worked for ten years like an ox, and paid off the debt.

Serebrakoff. I regret ever having started this conversation.

Voitski. Thanks entirely to my own personal efforts, the place is entirely clear of debts, and now, when I have grown old, you want to throw me out, neck and crop!

Serebrakoff. I can't imagine what you are driving at.

Voitski. For twenty-five years I have managed this place, and have sent you the returns from it like the most honest of servants, and you have never given me one single word of thanks for my work, not one—neither in my youth nor now. You allowed me a meager salary of five hundred roubles a year, a beggar's pittance, and have never even thought of adding a rouble to it.

Serebrakoff. What did I know about such

things, Ivan? I am not a practical man and don't understand them. You might have helped yourself to all you wanted.

Voitski. Yes, why did I not steal? Don't you all despise me for not stealing, when it would have been only justice? And I should not now have been a beggar!

Mme. Voitskaya. [*Sternly.*] Jean!

Telegin. [*Agitated.*] Vanya, old man, don't talk in that way. Why spoil such pleasant relations? [*He embraces him.*] Do stop!

Voitski. For twenty-five years I have been sitting here with my mother like a mole in a burrow. Our every thought and hope was yours and yours only. By day we talked with pride of you and your work, and spoke your name with veneration; our nights we wasted reading the books and papers which my soul now loathes.

Telegin. Don't, Vanya, don't. I can't stand it.

Serebrakoff. [*Wrathfully.*] What under heaven do you want, anyway?

Voitski. We used to think of you as almost superhuman, but now the scales have fallen from my eyes and I see you as you are! You write on art without knowing anything about it. Those books of yours which I used to admire are not worth one copper kopeck. You are a hoax!

Serebrakoff. Can't any one make him stop? I am going!

Helena. Ivan, I command you to stop this instant! Do you hear me?

Voitski. I refuse! [*SEREBRKOFF tries to get out of the room, but VOITSKI bars the way.*] Wait! I have not done yet! You have wrecked my life. I have never lived. My best years have gone for nothing, have been ruined, thanks to you. You are my most bitter enemy!

Telegin. I can't stand it; I can't stand it. I am going.

[*He goes out in great excitement.*]

Serebrakoff. But what do you want? What earthly right have you to use such language to me? Ruination! If this estate is yours, then take it, and let me be ruined!

Helena. I am going away out of this hell this minute. [*Shrieks.*] This is too much!

Voitski. My life has been a failure. I am clever and brave and strong. If I had lived a normal life I might have become another Schopenhauer or Dostoievski. I am losing my head! I am going crazy! Mother, I am in despair! Oh, mother!

Mme. Voitskaya. [*Sternly.*] Listen, Alexander!

[*SONIA falls on her knees beside the NURSE and nestles against her.*]

Sonia. Oh, nurse, nurse!

Voitski. Mother! What shall I do? But no, don't speak! I know what to do. [*To SEREBRANKOFF.*] And you will understand me!

[*He goes out through the door in the center of the room and MME. VOITSKAYA follows him.*]

Serebrakoff. Tell me, what on earth is the matter? Take this lunatic out of my sight! I cannot possibly live under the same roof with him. His room [*He points to the center door.*] is almost next door to mine. Let him take himself off into the village or into the wing of the house, or I shall leave here at once. I cannot stay in the same house with him.

Helena. [*To her HUSBAND.*] We are leaving today; we must get ready at once for our departure.

Serebrakoff. What a perfectly dreadful man!

Sonia. [*On her knees beside the NURSE and turning to her FATHER. She speaks with emotion.*] You must be kind to us, papa. Uncle Vanya and I are so unhappy! [*Controlling her despair.*] Have pity on us. Remember how Uncle Vanya and Granny used to copy and translate your books for you every night—every, every night. Uncle Vanya has toiled without rest; he would never spend a penny on us, we sent it all to you. We have not eaten the bread of idleness. I am not saying this as I should like to, but you must understand us, papa, you must be merciful to us.

Helena. [*Very excited, to her HUSBAND.*] For heaven's sake, Alexander, go and have a talk with him—explain!

Serebrakoff. Very well, I shall have a talk with him, but I won't apologize for a thing. I am not angry with him, but you must confess that his behavior has been strange, to say the least. Excuse me, I shall go to him.

[*He goes out through the center door.*]

Helena. Be gentle with him; try to quiet him. [*She follows him out.*]

Sonia. [*Nestling nearer to MARINA.*] Nurse, oh, nurse!

Marina. It's all right, my baby. When the geese have cackled they will be still again. First they cackle and then they stop.

Sonia. Nurse!

Marina. You are trembling all over, as if you were freezing. There, there, little orphan baby, God is merciful. A little linden-tea, and it will all pass away. Don't cry, my sweetest. [*Looking angrily at the door in the center of the room.*] See, the geese have all gone now. The devil take them!

[A shot is heard. HELENA screams behind the scenes. SONIA shudders.]

Marina. Bang! What's that?

Serebrakoff. [Comes in reeling with terror.] Hold him! hold him! He has gone mad!

[HELENA and VOITSKI are seen struggling in the doorway.]

Helena. [Trying to wrest the revolver from him.] Give it to me; give it to me, I tell you!

Voitski. Let me go, Helena, let me go! [He frees himself and rushes in, looking everywhere for SEREBRAKOFF.] Where is he?

Ah, there he is! [He shoots at him. A pause.] I didn't get him? I missed again? [Furiously.] Damnation! Damnation! To hell with him!

[He flings the revolver on the floor, and drops helpless into a chair. SEREBRAKOFF stands as if stupefied. HELENA leans against the wall, almost fainting.]

Helena. Take me away! Take me away! I can't stay here—I can't!

Voitski. [In despair.] Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?

Sonia. [Softly.] Oh, nurse, nurse!

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT FOURTH

VOITSKI'S bedroom, which is also his office. A table stands near the window; on it are ledgers, letter scales, and papers of every description. Near by stands a smaller table belonging to ASTROFF, with his paints and drawing materials. On the wall hangs a cage containing a starling. There is also a map of Africa on the wall, obviously of no use to anybody. There is a large sofa covered with buckram. A door to the left leads into an inner room; one to the right leads into the front hall, and before this door lies a mat for the peasants with their muddy boots to stand on. It is an autumn evening. The silence is profound.
[TELEGIN and MARINA are sitting facing one another, winding wool.]

Telegin. Be quick, Marina, or we shall be called away to say good-bye before you have finished. The carriage has already been ordered.

Marina. [Trying to wind more quickly.] I am a little tired.

Telegin. They are going to Kharkoff to live.

Marina. They do well to go.

Telegin. They have been frightened. The professor's wife won't stay here an hour longer. "If we are going at all, let's be off," says she, "we shall go to Kharkoff and look about us, and then we can send for our things." They are traveling light. It seems, Marina, that fate has decreed for them not to live here.

Marina. And quite rightly. What a storm they have just raised! It was shameful!

Telegin. It was indeed. The scene was worthy of the brush of Aibazofski.

Marina. I wish I'd never laid eyes on them. [A pause.] Now we shall have things as they were again: tea at eight, dinner at one, and supper in the evening; everything in order as decent folks, as Christians like to have it. [Sighs.] It is a long time since I have eaten noodles.

Telegin. Yes, we haven't had noodles for ages. [A pause.] Not for ages. As I was going through the village this morning, Marina, one of the shop-keepers called after me, "Hi! you hanger-on!" I felt it bitterly.

Marina. Don't pay the least attention to them, master; we are all dependents on God. You and Sonia and all of us. Every one must work, no one can sit idle. Where is Sonia?

Telegin. In the garden with the doctor, looking for Ivan. They fear he may lay violent hands on himself.

Marina. Where is his pistol?

Telegin. [Whispers.] I hid it in the cellar.
[VOITSKI and ASTROFF come in.]

Voitski. Leave me alone! [To MARINA and TELEGIN.] Go away! Go away and leave me to myself, if but for an hour. I won't have you watching me like this!

Telegin. Yes, yes, Vanya.

[He goes out on tiptoe.]
Marina. The gander cackles; ho! ho! ho!
[She gathers up her wool and goes out.]

Voitski. Leave me by myself!

Astroff. I would, with the greatest pleasure. I ought to have gone long ago, but I shan't leave you until you have returned what you took from me.

Voitski. I took nothing from you.

Astroff. I am not jesting, don't detain me, I really must go.

Voitski. I took nothing of yours.

Astroff. You didn't? Very well, I shall have to wait a little longer, and then you will have to forgive me if I resort to force. We shall have to bind you and search you. I mean what I say.

Voitski. Do as you please. [*A pause.*] Oh, to make such a fool of myself! To shoot twice and miss him both times! I shall never forgive myself.

Astroff. When the impulse came to shoot, it would have been as well had you put a bullet through your own head.

Voitski. [*Shrugging his shoulders.*] Strange! I attempted murder, and am not going to be arrested or brought to trial. That means they think me mad. [*With a bitter laugh.*] Me! I am mad, and those who hide their worthlessness, their dullness, their crying heartlessness behind a professor's mask, are sane! Those who marry old men and then deceive them under the noses of all, are sane! I saw you kiss her; I saw you in each other's arms!

Astroff. Yes, sir, I did kiss her; so there.

[*He puts his thumb to his nose.*]

Voitski. [*His eyes on the door.*] No, it is the earth that is mad, because she still bears us on her breast.

Astroff. That is nonsense.

Voitski. Well? Am I not a madman, and therefore irresponsible? Haven't I the right to talk nonsense?

Astroff. This is a farce! You are not mad; you are simply a ridiculous fool. I used to think every fool was out of his senses, but now I see that lack of sense is a man's normal state, and you are perfectly normal.

Voitski. [*Covers his face with his hands.*] Oh! If you knew how ashamed I am! These piercing pangs of shame are like nothing on earth. [*In an agonized voice.*] I can't endure them! [*He leans against the table.*] What can I do? What can I do?

Astroff. Nothing.

Voitski. You must tell me something! Oh, my God! I am forty-seven years old. I may live to sixty; I still have thirteen years before me; an eternity! How shall I be able to endure life for thirteen years? What shall I do? How can I fill them? Oh, don't you see? [*He presses ASTROFF's hand convulsively.*] Don't you see, if only I could live the rest of my life in some new way! If I could only wake some still, bright morning and feel that life had begun again; that the past was forgotten and had vanished like smoke. [*He*

weeps.] Oh, to begin life anew! Tell me, tell me how to begin.

Astroff. [*Crossly.*] What nonsense! What sort of a new life can you and I look forward to? We can have no hope.

Voitski. None?

Astroff. None. Of that I am convinced.

Voitski. Tell me what to do. [*He puts his hand to his heart.*] I feel such a burning pain here.

Astroff. [*Shouts angrily.*] Stop! [*Then, more gently.*] It may be that posterity, which will despise us for our blind and stupid lives, will find some road to happiness; but we—you and I—have but one hope, the hope that we may be visited by visions, perhaps by pleasant ones, as we lie resting in our graves. [*Sighing.*] Yes, brother, there were only two respectable, intelligent men in this county, you and I. Ten years or so of this life of ours, this miserable life, have sucked us under, and we have become as contemptible and petty as the rest. But don't try to talk me out of my purpose! Give me what you took from me, will you?

Voitski. I took nothing from you.

Astroff. You took a little bottle of morphine out of my medicine-case. [*A pause.*] Listen! If you are positively determined to make an end to yourself, go into the woods and shoot yourself there. Give up the morphine, or there will be a lot of talk and guess-work; people will think I gave it to you. I don't fancy having to perform a post-mortem on you. Do you think I should find it interesting? [*SONIA comes in.*]

Voitski. Leave me alone.

Astroff. [*To SONIA.*] Sonia, your uncle has stolen a bottle of morphine out of my medicine-case and won't give it up. Tell him that his behavior is—well, unwise. I haven't time, I must be going.

Sonia. Uncle Vanya, did you take the morphine?

Astroff. Yes, he took it. [*A pause.*] I am absolutely sure.

Sonia. Give it up! Why do you want to frighten us? [*Tenderly.*] Give it up, Uncle Vanya! My misfortune is perhaps even greater than yours, but I am not plunged in despair. I endure my sorrow, and shall endure it until my life comes to a natural end. You must endure yours, too. [*A pause.*] Give it up! Dear, darling Uncle Vanya. Give it up! [*She weeps.*] You are so good, I am sure you will have pity on us and give it up. You must endure your sorrow, Uncle Vanya; you must endure it.

[*VOITSKI takes a bottle from the drawer of the table and hands it to ASTROFF.*]

Voitski. There it is! [*To SONIA.*] And now, we must get to work at once; we must do something, or else I shall not be able to endure it.

Sonia. Yes, yes, to work! As soon as we have seen them off we shall go to work. [*She nervously straightens out the papers on the table.*] Everything is in a muddle!

Astroff. [*Putting the bottle in his case, which he straps together.*] Now I can be off.

[*HELENA comes in.*]

Helena. Are you here, Ivan? We are starting in a moment. Go to Alexander, he wants to speak to you.

Sonia. Go, Uncle Vanya. [*She takes VOITSKI'S arm.*] Come, you and papa must make peace; that is absolutely necessary.

[*SONIA and VOITSKI go out.*]

Helena. I am going away. [*She gives ASTROFF her hand.*] Good-bye.

Astroff. So soon?

Helena. The carriage is waiting.

Astroff. Good-bye.

Helena. You promised me you would go away yourself today.

Astroff. I have not forgotten. I am going at once. [*A pause.*] Were you frightened? Was it so terrible?

Helena. Yes.

Astroff. Couldn't you stay? Couldn't you? Tomorrow—in the forest—

Helena. No. It is all settled, and that is why I can look you so bravely in the face. Our departure is fixed. One thing I must ask of you: don't think too badly of me; I should like you to respect me.

Astroff. Ah! [*With an impatient gesture.*] Stay, I implore you! Confess that there is nothing for you to do in this world. You have no object in life; there is nothing to occupy your attention, and sooner or later your feelings must master you. It is inevitable. It would be better if it happened not in Kharkoff or in Kursk, but here, in nature's lap. It would then at least be poetical, even beautiful. Here you have the forests, the houses half in ruins that Turgenieff writes of.

Helena. How comical you are! I am angry with you and yet I shall always remember you with pleasure. You are interesting and original. You and I will never meet again, and so I shall tell you—why should I conceal it?—that I am just a little in love with you. Come, one more last pressure of our hands, and then let us part good friends. Let us not bear each other any ill will.

Astroff. [*Pressing her hand.*] Yes, go. [*Thoughtfully.*] You seem to be sincere and good, and yet there is something strangely

disquieting about all your personality. No sooner did you arrive here with your husband than every one whom you found busy and actively creating something was forced to drop his work and give himself up for the whole summer to your husband's gout and yourself. You and he have infected us with your idleness. I have been swept off my feet; I have not put my hand to a thing for weeks, during which sickness has been running its course unchecked among the people, and the peasants have been pasturing their cattle in my woods and young plantations. Go where you will, you and your husband will always carry destruction in your train. I am joking, of course, and yet I am strangely sure that had you stayed here we should have been overtaken by the most immense desolation. I would have gone to my ruin, and you—you would not have prospered. So go! *È finita la commedia!*

Helena. [*Snatching a pencil off ASTROFF'S table, and hiding it with a quick movement.*] I shall take this pencil for memory!

Astroff. How strange it is. We meet, and then suddenly it seems that we must part forever. That is the way in this world. As long as we are alone, before Uncle Vanya comes in with a bouquet—allow me—to kiss you good-bye—may I? [*He kisses her on the cheek.*] So! Splendid!

Helena. I wish you every happiness. [*She glances about her.*] For once in my life, I shall! and scorn the consequences! [*She kisses him impetuously, and they quickly part.*] I must go.

Astroff. Yes, go. If the carriage is there, then start at once. [*They stand listening.*]

Astroff. *È finita!*

[*VOITSKI, SEREBRAKOFF, MME. VOITSKAYA with her book, TELEGIN, and SONIA come in.*]

Serebrakoff. [*To VOITSKI.*] Shame on him who bears malice for the past. I have gone through so much in the last few hours that I feel capable of writing a whole treatise on the conduct of life for the instruction of posterity. I gladly accept your apology, and myself ask your forgiveness.

[*He kisses VOITSKI three times. HELENA embraces SONIA.*]

Serebrakoff. [*Kissing MME. VOITSKAYA'S hand.*] Mother!

Mme. Voitskaya. [*Kissing him.*] Have your picture taken, Alexander, and send me one. You know how dear you are to me.

Telegin. Good-bye, your Excellency. Don't forget us.

Serebrakoff. [*Kissing his DAUGHTER.*] Good-bye, good-bye all. [*Shaking hands with*

ASTROFF.] Many thanks for your pleasant company. I have a deep regard for your opinions and your enthusiasm, but let me, as an old man, give one word of advice at parting: do something, my friend! Work! Do something! [*They all bow.*] Good luck to you all.

[*He goes out, followed by MME. VOITSKAYA and SONIA.*]

VOITSKI. [*Kissing HELENA's hand fervently.*] Good-bye—forgive me. I shall never see you again!

HELENA. [*Touched.*] Good-bye, dear boy.

[*She lightly kisses his head as he bends over her hand, and goes out.*]

ASTROFF. Tell them to bring my carriage around too, Waffles.

TELEGIN. All right, old man.

[ASTROFF and VOITSKI are left behind alone. ASTROFF collects his paints and drawing materials on the table and packs them away in a box.]

ASTROFF. Why don't you go to see them off?

VOITSKI. Let them go! I—I can't go out there. I feel too sad. I must go to work on something at once. To work! To work!

[*He rummages through his papers on the table. A pause. The tinkling of bells is heard as the horses trot away.*]

ASTROFF. They have gone! The professor, I suppose, is glad to go. He couldn't be tempted back now by a fortune.

[MARINA comes in.]

MARINA. They have gone.

[*She sits down in an armchair and knits her stocking.*]

[SONIA comes in wiping her eyes.]

SONIA. They have gone. God be with them. [*To her UNCLE.*] And now, Uncle Vanya, let us do something!

VOITSKI. To work! To work!

SONIA. It is long, long, since you and I have sat together at this table. [*She lights a lamp on the table.*] No ink! [*She takes the inkstand to the cupboard and fills it from an inkbottle.*] How sad it is to see them go!

[MME. VOITSKAYA comes slowly in.]

MME. VOITSKAYA. They have gone.

[*She sits down and at once becomes absorbed in her book.*]

[SONIA sits down at the table and looks through an account book.]

SONIA. First, Uncle Vanya, let us write up the accounts. They are in a dreadful state. Come, begin. You take one and I will take the other.

VOITSKI. In account with—

[*They sit silently writing.*]

MARINA. [*Yawning.*] The sand-man has come.

ASTROFF. How still it is. Their pens scratch; the cricket sings; it is so warm and comfortable. I hate to go.

[*The tinkling of bells is heard.*]

ASTROFF. My carriage has come. There now remains but to say good-bye to you, my friends, and to my table here, and then—away!

[*He puts the map into the portfolio.*]

MARINA. Don't hurry away; sit a little longer with us.

ASTROFF. Impossible.

VOITSKI. [*Writing.*] And carry forward from the old debt two seventy-five—

[WORKMAN comes in.]

WORKMAN. Your carriage is waiting, sir.

ASTROFF. All right. [*He hands the WORKMAN his medicine-case, portfolio, and box.*] Look out, don't crush the portfolio!

WORKMAN. Very well, sir. [*Exit.*]

SONIA. When shall we see you again?

ASTROFF. Hardly before next summer. Probably not this winter; though, of course, if anything should happen you will let me know. [*He shakes hands with them.*] Thank you for your kindness, for your hospitality, for everything! [*He goes up to MARINA and kisses her head.*] Good-bye, old nurse!

MARINA. Are you going without your tea?

ASTROFF. I don't want any, nurse.

MARINA. Won't you have a drop of vodka?

ASTROFF. [*Hesitatingly.*] Yes, I might.

[MARINA goes out.]

ASTROFF. [*After a pause.*] My off-wheeler¹ has gone lame for some reason. I noticed it yesterday when Peter was taking him to water.

VOITSKI. You should have him re-shod.

ASTROFF. I shall have to go around by the blacksmith's on my way home. It can't be avoided. [*He stands looking up at the map of Africa hanging on the wall.*] I suppose it is roasting hot in Africa now.

VOITSKI. Yes, I suppose it is.

[MARINA comes back carrying a tray on which are a glass of vodka and a piece of bread.]

MARINA. Help yourself. [ASTROFF drinks.]

MARINA. To your good health! [*She bows deeply.*] Eat your bread with it.

ASTROFF. No, I like it so. And now, good-bye. [*To MARINA.*] You needn't come out to see me off, nurse.

[*He goes out. SONIA follows him with a candle to light him to the carriage.*]

MARINA sits down in her armchair.]

VOITSKI. [*Writing.*] On the 2d of February, twenty pounds of butter; on the 16th,

¹ The outer horse of a troika.

twenty pounds of butter again. Buckwheat flour—

[*A pause. Bells are heard tinkling.*]

Marina. He has gone. [*A pause.*]

[*SONIA comes in and sets the candlestick on the table.*]

Sonia. He has gone.

Voitski. [*Adding and writing.*]. Total, fifteen—twenty-five—

[*SONIA sits down and begins to write.*]

Marina. [*Yawning.*] Oh, ho! The Lord have mercy.

[*TELEGIN comes in on tiptoe, sits down near the door, and begins to tune his guitar.*]

Voitski. [*To SONIA, stroking her hair.*] Oh, my child, I am so miserable; if you only knew how miserable I am!

Sonia. What can we do? We must live our lives. [*A pause.*] Yes, we shall live, Uncle Vanya. We shall live through the long procession of days before us, and through the long evenings; we shall patiently bear the trials that fate imposes on us; we shall work for others without rest, both now and when we are old; and when our last hour comes we shall meet it humbly, and there, beyond

the grave, we shall say that we have suffered and wept, that our life was bitter, and God will have pity on us. Ah, then, dear, dear Uncle, we shall see that bright and beautiful life; we shall rejoice and look back upon our sorrow here; a tender smile—and—we shall rest. I have faith, Uncle, fervent, passionate faith. [*SONIA kneels down before her UNCLE and lays her head on his hands. She speaks in a weary voice.*] We shall rest. [*TELEGIN plays softly on the guitar.*] We shall rest. We shall hear the angels. We shall see heaven shining like a jewel. We shall see all evil and all our pain sink away in the great compassion that shall enfold the world. Our life will be as peaceful and tender and sweet as a caress. I have faith; I have faith. [*She wipes away her tears.*] My poor, poor Uncle Vanya, you are crying! [*Weeping.*] You have never known what happiness was, but wait, Uncle Vanya, wait! We shall rest. [*She embraces him.*] We shall rest. [*The WATCHMAN'S rattle is heard in the garden; TELEGIN plays softly; MME. VOITSKAYA writes something on the margin of her pamphlet; MARINA knits her stocking.*] We shall rest.

THE CURTAIN SLOWLY FALLS

THE DREAM PLAY *

By

AUGUST STRINDBERG

Translated by EDWIN BJÖRKMAN

LIKE IBSEN, AUGUST STRINDBERG HAS CAST the shadow of his genius athwart the modern theater. If the Ibsen shadow has receded with time, Strindberg's has advanced and, as many believe, will long continue to do so. Like Ibsen he first wrote for the theater of naturalism and later, far more significantly than Ibsen, he wrote for the theater of symbols. As a naturalist—that is, as a realist who observes life with scientific insight into its causal relations—Strindberg was more penetrating than Ibsen. He laid bare recesses of the mind that Ibsen left veiled. Conflicts which Ibsen presented as moral issues, Strindberg treated as the clashes of mental states which were as complex as the experience and the heritage of the individuals involved.

His daring self-revelation in the novel form, especially in the two parts of *Marriage* and the three parts of *The Bondswoman's Son*, made his name anathema to his own countrymen, but gained him in Paris a cordial welcome to the newly formed circle of the naturalists. His play *The Father* was published in translation with a preface by Zola in 1887, just as Antoine was opening his *Théâtre-Libre*. He was inspired to write for Antoine's theater the plays *Lady Julie*, *Comrades*, *Creditors*, and *The Stronger*. And so, as a chief apostle of the naturalist movement, he took his place among the foremost dramatists of our age. Except as the author of these early plays, he remains almost unknown on the English-speaking stage. These have won him a scant popularity and have left him an enigma. His vitalizing characterization and the bold experiments in play structure of his later period have, however, profoundly influenced such modernists as O'Neill and they therefore deserve more general study than they have received. His Anglo-Saxon readers have been inclined to

rule him out of the theater as a morbid and unamiable writer, labeling him a woman-hater, a neurotic, a misanthrope, a disorderly liver, a visionary, and a sensationalist. On the contrary, he was more than orderly, and was tragically devoted to women. He was a clear-minded observer, and except for a few years of almost insane preoccupation with futile scientific experiments, his intellectual life was more than usually self-possessed. He was an ardent but inept reformer, who had to create a Utopia in which only he himself was at home. To many, however, he still remains repulsively frank and egoistic in his reactions to love and life.

His immense influence upon dramatic style and form is due to the focus of his intense and analytical mind upon the springs of action, and particularly upon the inner reality of thought and impulse, both conscious and unconscious. His has been called "the shadow drama of the soul." It is his relentless disclosure of deeply hidden motives—happily hidden, perhaps—that keeps his work still abreast of our psychologizing dramatists. At this point, chiefly, he took exception to Ibsen, whose insistence upon moral reality in character and action blinded him to forces of the mind that seemed to Strindberg still more decisive. Ibsen, for instance, on moral principles, demanded social and moral equality for woman, and made the independent woman his protagonist. Strindberg found this attitude toward woman revoltingly sentimental. He, on the other hand, invoked biological and psychological facts as well as ethics and logic, and in this light revealed woman as needing no such aid. He saw in her mother-mentality a terrible force, cosmic and insatiable, against which man, as breadwinner, was at a hopeless, tragic disadvantage. Even her charm, to which Strindberg owned himself a slave, made her doubly dangerous. The revolt of man against the domination of the creation instinct in woman

* Used by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

became as prominent in Strindberg's work for the stage as the reverse situation in Ibsen's.

This belief was by no means academic. Strindberg had seen his quiet, cultured father dominated by a servant-girl wife, his own mother, to whom he also was passionately devoted. Against this wife-and-mother tyranny he waged a life-long battle. He met it again in his wives, and made it the basic motive in many of his feminine characters. This attitude was not, however, one of personal dislike. So long as woman remained in her own sphere and did not offer rivalry or domination in man's, Strindberg professed to admire and even to worship her. He was ready to grant her full equality before the law. He even advocated votes for women. It was intellectual and spiritual domination that he protested against. In both respects he believed woman man's inferior. Her aggressive invasion of man's own vocations and mental life he regarded as a menace to the race. She should remain the home-maker. When she assumed a larger influence, the horrors set forth in *The Father* might be expected; the husband might then become merely an instrument to help her fulfil her racial purpose, to be cast off or, perhaps, driven insane. Biassed and lacking in a sense of humor as Strindberg seems to have been when dealing with this aspect of the sex war, he has, nevertheless, enlisted a host of followers from Shaw to O'Neill.

Although his contributions to the naturalist theater were of first importance, those he made to the more recent theater of varied symbolic expression have made him a living influence in the theater of today and tomorrow. The mystic was always latent in him. In his last Stockholm period the writings of Maeterlinck and Swedenborg aroused this dormant side of his nature. Beginning with *To Damascus* (1898) and continuing through *The Dream Play* and *The Spook Sonata*, he set on foot those tendencies that have disrupted the old dramatic forms and are now known as expressionistic. This much debated and vague term, first used by the *Sturm* school of German artists and literary revolters of about 1915, has come to be applied in the theater to all those methods, whether of playwriting or of staging, which aim to give expression by means of stage symbols to a state of mind or an emotion. For our present purpose it suffices to consider the dream as such a state. To make concrete in the theater the dream consciousness of the writer or of his characters is to be

expressionistic in one sense of that term. The old surfaces of life are broken as in a dream and the photographic method of representation is frankly abandoned. Symbol personages walk abroad regardless of time or the three dimensions. Personalities break into their component aspects, each becoming symbolic rather than individual.

The Dream Play affords a pleasant example of this method, which has obviously influenced recent American writers like O'Neill, as well as writers for the German and Russian theaters. Strindberg described the process in a memorandum prefixed to his play:

"In this *Dream Play*, as in the previous *To Damascus*, the author has sought to imitate the disconnected, but apparently logical, form of the dream. Anything may happen; everything is possible and probable. Time and space do not exist; on an insignificant background of reality imagination spins threads and weaves new patterns: a mixture of memories, experiences, free fancies, absurdities, and improvisations. The characters split, double, multiply, evaporate, solidify, diffuse, clarify. But one consciousness reigns above them all—that of the dreamer; it knows no secrets, no incongruities, no scruples, no law."

Other comments of Strindberg regarding playwriting and presentation have been so influential in the modern theater that they are appended:

On the function of tragedy: "People clamor for the joy of life, and theatrical managers order farces, as though the joy of life consisted in being foolish. . . . I find the joy of life in the powerful, cruel struggle of life, and my enjoyment is in discovering something, in learning something." Preface to *Lady Julie*.

On the true and false naturalism: "This [literary photography] is realism, a method latterly exalted to an art, a little art which cannot see the wood for the trees. This is the false naturalism, which believed that art consisted merely in sketching a piece of nature in a natural manner; but the true naturalism is that which seeks out those points in life where the great conflicts occur, which loves to see that which cannot be seen every day, rejoices in the battle of elemental powers, whether they be called love or hatred, revolt or sociability; which cares not whether a subject be beautiful or ugly, if only it is great." *On Modern Drama and the Modern Theatre*.

On character analysis and complexity of personality: [Strindberg's insistence on hid-

den motivation and many-sided personality is still productive of results in our own theater.]

"An event in life—and this is a comparatively new discovery—is generally produced by a whole series of more or less deep-seated motives, but the spectator chooses for the most part the one which is easiest for him to grasp. . . ." [He cites as illustration commonly assigned causes for a suicide and continues.] "It is possible that the motives lay in all of these causes, or in none, and that the dead man hid the real one by putting forward another which has thrown a more favorable light on his memory.

"I have drawn my characters vacillating, broken, mixtures of old and new. . . . My souls are conglomerations of past and present stages of culture, scraps of books and newspapers, fragments of men and women, torn shreds of Sunday attire that are now rags such as go to make up a soul.

"I do not, therefore, believe in simple theatrical characters, and the summary judgments which authors pass on human beings, such as: this one is stupid; that one is brutal;

he is jealous; he is mean, etc., should be refuted by naturalists who know the rich complexity of the soul, and realize that vice has an obverse which shows a considerable likeness to virtue." Preface to *Lady Julie*.

Of Strindberg's modern ideas about staging, the following have been largely influential:

1. Footlights should be suppressed and side lights and borders used.

2. No more scenery should be used than is necessary. "With the aid of a table and two chairs, the strongest conflicts which life offers could be presented." Not a whole room, but an impressionist suggestion of one corner with its furniture is enough. Simple draperies were used by him at a later period.

3. Actors should be taught to play for the public and not at it. They may even turn their backs to it, and they should use a minimum of make-up.

4. The orchestra should be concealed.

5. The house should be small and intimate. Strindberg's own theater, opened in 1907, seated only 200 persons. The Künstler Theater in Munich is said to reflect his ideas.

AUGUST STRINDBERG

Born 1849, Stockholm.

1867-1872, University of Upsala.

1872, First Version of *Master Olof*, inspired by Ibsen's *Brand*, was unsuccessful. In 1880 the fifth version was successfully produced.

1877-1891, First and most influential of three marriages.

1883-1897, Lived mainly on the Continent.

1887, *The Father*, his first naturalistic play. In Paris he wrote for Antoine's *Théâtre-Libre* his plays, *Lady Julie*, *Comrades*, *The Stronger*, and *Creditors*.

1894-1897, Period of scientific activity and mental aberration.

1897-1912, Return to Stockholm. Historical plays and plays of symbolism.

1907, The Intimate Theatre, devoted to Strindberg's plays, opened in Stockholm.

1912, Popular triumph and death.

PLAYS

1869 *The Free Thinker*. 1869 *Hermione*. 1870 *In Rome*. 1871 *The Outlaw*. 1872 *The Heretic* (rewritten and published as *Master Olof*). 1880 *Master Olof* (fifth version). 1880 *The Secret of the Guild*. 1881

The Year Forty-Eight. 1881 *The Wanderings of Lucky-Per*. 1882 *Sir Bengt's Lady*. 1887 *The Father*. 1888 *Comrades*. 1888 *Lady Julie*. 1889 *Hemsö Folk*. 1890 *Creditors*. 1890 *Pariah*. 1890 *Samum*. 1890 *The*

Stronger. 1892 *The Keys of Heaven*. 1893 *Facing Death*. 1893 *The First Warning*. 1893 *Debit and Credit*. 1893 *Mother Love*. 1893 *Playing with Fire*. 1893 *The Link*. 1898 *To Damascus* (Parts I and II). 1899 *There Are Crimes and Crimes*. 1899 *Advent*. 1899 *Gustavus Vasa*. 1899 *Eric XIV*. 1899 *The Saga of the Folkungs*. 1900 *Gustavus Adolphus*. 1901 *Caspar's Shrove Tuesday*. 1901 *Easter*. 1901 *Midsummer*. 1901 *The Dance of Death* (Parts I and II). 1901 *Engelbrecht*. 1901 *Charles XII*. 1902 *The Bridal Crown*. 1902 *Swanwhite*. 1902 *The Dream Play*. 1903 *Christina*. 1903 *Gustavus III*. 1904 *The Nightingale of Wittenberg* (Martin Luther). 1904 *To Damascus* (Part III). 1907 *Storm*. 1907 *The Burned Lot*. 1907 *The Spook Sonata*. 1907 *The Pelican*. 1908 *The Slippers of Abou Casem*.

1908 *The Last Knight*. 1909 *The National Director*. 1909 *The Earl of Bjalbo*. 1909 *The Black Glove*. 1909 *The Great Highway*. 1909 *The Tooth*. 1917 *Moses*. 1918 *Greece or Socrates*. 1918 *The Lamb and the Wild Beast; or Christ*.

WRITINGS ON DRAMA

1887 Author's Preface to *Lady Julie*. 1889 *On Modern Drama and the Modern Theatre*. 1908 *Memorandum to the Members of the Intimate Theatre*. 1909 *An Open Letter to the Intimate Theatre*. 1911 *Dramaturgie* (translated into German by E. Schering). 1914 *Dramatische Charakteristiken* (translated into German by E. Schering).

THE DREAM PLAY

PROLOGUE

The background represents cloud banks that resemble corroding slate cliffs with ruins of castles and fortresses.

The constellations of Leo, Virgo, and Libra are visible, and from their midst the planet Jupiter is shining with a strong light.

[THE DAUGHTER OF INDRA¹ stands on the topmost cloud.]

The Voice of Indra. [From above.]

Where are you, daughter, where?

The Daughter.

Here, father, here.

The Voice.

You've lost your way, my child—beware,
you sink—

How got you there?

The Daughter.

I followed from ethereal heights the ray
Of lightning, and for a car a cloud I took—
It sank, and now my journey downward
tends.

O, noble father, Indra, tell what realms
I now draw near? The air is here so close,
And breathing difficult.

The Voice.

Behind you lies the second world; the
third

Is where you stand. From Cukra, morning
star,

You have withdrawn yourself to enter
soon

The vapory circle of the earth. For mark,
The Seventh House you take. It's Libra
called:

There stands the day-star in the balanced
hour

When Fall gives equal weight to night and
day.

The Daughter.

You named the earth—is that the ponder-
ous world

And dark, that from the moon must take
its light?

The Voice.

It is the heaviest and densest sphere
Of all that travel through the space.

The Daughter.

And is it never brightened by the sun?

The Voice.

Of course, the sun does reach it—now and
then—

The Daughter.

There is a rift, and downward goes my
glance—

The Voice.

What sees my child?

The Daughter.

I see—O beautiful!—with forests green,
With waters blue, white peaks, and yellow
fields—

The Voice.

But still more beautiful it was of yore,
Yes, beautiful as all that Brahma made—
In primal morn of ages. Then occurred
Some strange mishap; the orbit was dis-
turbed;

Rebellion led to crime that called for
check—

The Daughter.

Now from below I hear some sounds
arise—

What sort of race is dwelling there?

The Voice.

See for yourself—Of Brahma's work no ill
I say: but what you hear, it is their speech.

The Daughter.

It sounds as if—it has no happy ring!

The Voice.

I fear me not—for even their mother-
tongue

Is named complaint. A race most hard to
please,

And thankless, are the dwellers on the
earth—

The Daughter.

O, say not so—for I hear cries of joy,
Hear noise and thunder, see the lightnings
flash—

Now bells are ringing, fires are lit,
And thousand upon thousand tongues
Sing praise and thanks unto the heavens
on high—

Too harshly, father, you are judging them.

The Voice.

Descend, that you may see and hear, and
then

Return and let me know if their com-
plaints

¹ In Hindu mythology Indra, the god of the heavens, corresponded to Zeus of the Greeks and Jupiter of the Romans. Brahma was the god of creation.

And wailings have some reasonable ground——

The Daughter.

Well then, I go; but, father, come with me.

The Voice.

No, there below I cannot breathe——

The Daughter.

Now sinks the cloud—what sultriness—I choke!

I am not breathing air, but smoke and steam——

With heavy weight it drags me down,
And I can feel already how it rolls——

Indeed, the best of worlds is not the third——

The Voice.

The best I cannot call it, nor the worst.

Its name is Dust; and like them all, it rolls:

And therefore dizzy sometimes grows the race,

And seems to be half foolish and half mad——

Take courage, child—a trial, that is all!

The Daughter.

[*Kneeling as the cloud sinks downward.*]

I sink!

CURTAIN

THE PLAY

The background represents a forest of gigantic hollyhocks in bloom. They are white, pink, crimson, sulphurous, violet; and above their tops is seen the gilded roof of a castle, the apex of which is formed by a bud resembling a crown. At the foot of the castle walls stand a number of straw ricks, and around these stable litter is scattered. The side-scenes, which remain unchanged throughout the play, show conventionalized frescoes, suggesting at once internal decoration, architecture, and landscape.

[*Enter THE GLAZIER and THE DAUGHTER.*]

The Daughter. The castle is growing higher and higher above the ground. Do you see how much it has grown since last year?

The Glazier. [*To himself.*] I have never seen this castle before—have never heard of a castle that grew, but— [*To THE DAUGHTER, with firm conviction.*] Yes, it has grown two yards, but that is because they have manured it—and if you notice, it has put out a wing on the sunny side.

The Daughter. Ought it not to be blooming soon, as we are already past midsummer?

The Glazier. Don't you see the flower up there?

The Daughter. Yes, I see! [*Claps her hands.*] Say, father, why do flowers grow out of dirt?

The Glazier. [*Simply.*] Because they do not feel at home in the dirt, and so they make haste to get up into the light in order to blossom and die.

The Daughter. Do you know who lives in that castle?

The Glazier. I have known it, but cannot remember.

The Daughter. I believe a prisoner is kept there—and he must be waiting for me to set him free.

The Glazier. And what is he to pay for it?

The Daughter. One does not bargain about one's duty. Let us go into the castle.

The Glazier. Yes, let us go in.

[*They go toward the background, which opens and slowly disappears to either side.*]

[*The stage shows now a humble, bare room, containing only a table and a few chairs. On one of the chairs sits an OFFICER, dressed in a very unusual yet modern uniform. He is tilting the chair backward and beating the table with his sabre.*]

The Daughter. [*Goes to THE OFFICER, from whose hand she gently takes the sabre.*]

Don't! Don't!

The Officer. Oh, Agnes dear, let me keep the sabre.

The Daughter. No, you break the table. [*To THE GLAZIER.*] Now you go down to the harness-room and fix that window pane. We'll meet later. [*THE GLAZIER goes out.*]

The Daughter. You are imprisoned in your own rooms—I have come to set you free.

The Officer. I have been waiting for you, but I was not sure you were willing to do it.

The Daughter. The castle is strongly built; it has seven walls, but—it can be done! —Do you want it, or do you not?

The Officer. Frankly speaking, I cannot tell—for in either case I shall suffer pain.

Every joy that life brings has to be paid for with twice its measure of sorrow. It is hard to stay where I am, but if I buy the sweets of freedom, then I shall have to suffer twice as much—Agnes, I'd rather endure it as it is, if I can only see you.

The Daughter. What do you see in me?

The Officer. Beauty, which is the harmony of the universe—There are lines of your body which are nowhere to be found, except in the orbits of the solar system, in strings that are singing softly, or in the vibrations of light—You are a child of heaven—

The Daughter. So are you.

The Officer. Why must I then keep horses, tend stable, and cart straw?

The Daughter. So that you may long to get away from here.

The Officer. I am longing, but it is so hard to find one's way out.

The Daughter. But it is a duty to seek freedom in the light.

The Officer. Duty? Life has never recognized any duties toward me.

The Daughter. You feel yourself wronged by life?

The Officer. Yes, it has been unjust—

[Now voices are heard from behind a partition, which a moment later is pulled away. THE OFFICER and THE DAUGHTER look in that direction and stop as if paralyzed in the midst of a gesture.]

[At a table sits THE MOTHER, looking very sick. In front of her a tallow candle is burning, and every little while she trims it with a pair of snuffers. The table is piled with new-made shirts, and these she is marking with a quill and ink. To the left stands a brown-colored wardrobe. THE FATHER holds out a silk mantilla toward THE MOTHER.]

The Father. [Gently.] You don't want it?

The Mother. A silk mantilla for me, my dear—of what use would that be when I am going to die shortly?

The Father. Do you believe what the doctor says?

The Mother. Yes, I believe what he says, but still more what the voice says in here.

The Father. [Sadly.] It is true then?—And you are thinking of your children first and last.

The Mother. That has been my life and my reason for living—my joy and my sorrow—

The Father. Christine, forgive me—everything!

The Mother. What have I to forgive? Dearest, you forgive me! We have been

tormenting each other. Why? That we may not know. We couldn't do anything else—However, here is the new linen for the children. See that they change twice a week—Wednesdays and Sundays—and that Louise washes them—their whole bodies—Are you going out?

The Father. I have to be in the Department at eleven o'clock.

The Mother. Ask Alfred to come in before you go.

The Father. [Pointing to THE OFFICER.] Why, he is standing right there, dear heart.

The Mother. So my eyes are failing, too—Yes, it is turning dark. [Trims the candle.] Come here, Alfred.

[THE FATHER goes out through the middle of the wall, nodding good-bye as he leaves. THE OFFICER goes over to THE MOTHER.]

The Mother. Who is that girl?

The Officer. [Whispers.] It is Agnes.

The Mother. Oh, is that Agnes?—Do you know what they say?—That she is a daughter of the god Indra who has asked leave to descend to the earth in order that she may find out what the conditions of men are—But don't say anything about it.

The Officer. A child of the gods, indeed!

The Mother. [Aloud.] My Alfred, I must soon part from you and from the other children—But let me first speak a word to you that bears on all the rest of your life.

The Officer. [Sadly.] Speak, mother.

The Mother. Only a word: don't quarrel with God!

The Officer. What do you mean, mother?

The Mother. Don't go around feeling that life has wronged you.

The Officer. But when I am treated unjustly—

The Mother. You are thinking of the time when you were unjustly punished for having taken a penny that later turned up?

The Officer. Yes, and that one wrong gave a false twist to my whole life—

The Mother. Perhaps. But please take a look into that wardrobe now—

The Officer. [Embarrassed.] You know, then? It is—

The Mother. "The Swiss Family Robinson"—for which—

The Officer. Don't say any more!

The Mother. For which your brother was punished—and which you had torn and hidden away.

The Officer. Just think that the old wardrobe is still standing there after twenty years— We have moved so many times, and my mother died ten years ago.

The Mother. Yes, and what of it? You are always asking all sorts of questions, and in that way you spoil the better part of your life—There is Lena, now.

Lena. [*Enter.*] Thank you very much, ma'am, but I can't go to the baptism.

The Mother. And why not, my girl?

Lena. I have nothing to put on.

The Mother. I'll let you use my mantilla here.

Lena. Oh, no, ma'am, that wouldn't do!

The Mother. Why not?—It is not likely that I'll go to any more parties.

The Officer. And what will father say? It is a present from him——

The Mother. What small minds——

The Father. [*Puts his head through the wall.*] Are you going to lend my present to the servant girl?

The Mother. Don't talk that way! Can you not remember that I was a servant girl also? Why should you offend one who has done nothing?

The Father. Why should you offend me, your husband?

The Mother. Oh, this life! If you do anything nice, there is always somebody who finds it nasty. If you act kindly to one, it hurts another. Oh, this life!

[*She trims the candle so that it goes out. The stage turns dark and the partition is pushed back to its former position.*]

The Daughter. Men are to be pitied.

The Officer. You think so?

The Daughter. Yes, life is hard—but love overcomes everything. You shall see for yourself. [*They go toward the background.*]

[*The background is raised and a new one revealed, showing an old, dilapidated party-wall. In the center of it is a gate closing a passageway. This opens upon a green, sunlit space, where is seen a tremendous blue monk's-hood (aconite). To the left of the gate sits THE PORTRESS. Her head and shoulders are covered by a shawl, and she is crocheting at a bedspread with a starlike pattern. To the right of the gate is a billboard, which THE BILLPOSTER is cleaning. Beside him stands a dipnet with a green pole. Further to the right is a door that has an air-hole shaped like a four-leaved clover. To the left of the gate stands a small linden tree with coal-black trunk and a few pale-green leaves. Near it is a small air-hole leading into a cellar.*¹]

¹ Though the author says nothing about it here, subsequent stage directions indicate a door and a window behind the place occupied by THE PORTRESS. Both lead into her room or lodge, which contains a telephone.

The Daughter. [*Going to THE PORTRESS.*] Is the spread not done yet?

The Portress. No, dear. Twenty-six years on such a piece of work is not much.

The Daughter. And your lover never came back?

The Portress. No, but it was not his fault. He had to go—poor thing! That was thirty years ago now.

The Daughter. [*To THE BILLPOSTER.*] She belonged to the ballet? Up there in the opera-house?

The Billposter. She was number one—but when he went, it was as if her dancing had gone with him—and so she didn't get any more parts.

The Daughter. Everybody complains—with their eyes, at least, and often with words also——

The Billposter. I don't complain very much—not now, since I have a dipnet and a green cauf¹——

The Daughter. And that can make you happy?

The Billposter. Oh, I'm so happy, so—It was the dream of my youth, and now it has come true. Of course, I have grown to be fifty years——

The Daughter. Fifty years for a dipnet and a cauf——

The Billposter. A green cauf—mind you, green——

The Daughter. [*To THE PORTRESS.*] Let me have the shawl now, and I shall sit here and watch the human children. But you must stand behind me and tell me about everything.

[*She takes the shawl and sits down at the gate.*]

The Portress. This is the last day, and the house will be closed up for the season. This is the day when they learn whether their contracts are to be renewed.

The Daughter. And those that fail of engagement——

The Portress. O, Lord have mercy! I pull the shawl over my head not to see them.

The Daughter. Poor human creatures!

The Portress. Look, here comes one—She's not one of the chosen. See, how she cries.

[*THE SINGER enters from the right; rushes through the gate with her handkerchief to her eyes; stops for a moment in the passageway beyond the gate and leans her head against the wall; then out quickly.*]

The Daughter. Men are to be pitied!

¹ A floating wooden box with holes in it used to hold fish.

The Portress. But look at this one. That's the way a happy person looks.

[*THE OFFICER enters through the passageway, dressed in Prince Albert coat and high hat, and carrying a bunch of roses in one hand; he is radiantly happy.*]

The Portress. He is going to marry Miss Victoria.

The Officer. [*Far down on the stage, looks up and sings.*] Victoria!

The Portress. The young lady will be coming in a moment.

The Officer. Good! The carriage is waiting, the table is set, the wine is on ice—Oh, permit me to embrace you, ladies! [*He embraces THE PORTRESS and THE DAUGHTER. Sings.*] Victoria!

A Woman's Voice from Above. [*Sings.*] I am here!

The Daughter. Do you know me?

The Officer. No, I know one woman only—Victoria. Seven years I have come here to wait for her—at noon, when the sun touched the chimneys, and at night, when it was growing dark. Look at the asphalt here, and you will see the path worn by the steps of a faithful lover. Hooray! She is mine. [*Sings.*] Victoria. [*There is no reply.*] Well, she is dressing, I suppose. [*To THE BILLPOSTER.*] There is the dipnet, I see. Everybody belonging to the opera is crazy about dipnets—or rather about fishes—because the fishes are dumb and cannot sing!—What is the price of a thing like that?

The Billposter. It is rather expensive.

The Officer. [*Sings.*] Victoria! [*Shakes the linden tree.*] Look, it is turning green once more. For the eighth time. [*Sings.*] Victoria!—Now she is fixing her hair. [*To THE DAUGHTER.*] Look here, Madam, could I not go up and get my bride?

The Portress. Nobody is allowed on the stage.

The Officer. Seven years I have been coming here. Seven times three hundred and sixty-five makes two thousand five hundred and fifty-five. [*Stops and pokes at the door with the four-leaved clover hole.*] And I have been looking two thousand five hundred and fifty-five times at that door without discovering where it leads. And that clover leaf which is to let in light—for whom is the light meant? Is there anybody within? Does anybody live there?

The Portress. I don't know. I have never seen it opened.

The Officer. It looks like a pantry door which I saw once when I was only four years old and went visiting with the maid on a

Sunday afternoon. We called at several houses—on other maids—but I did not get beyond the kitchen anywhere, and I had to sit between the water barrel and the salt box. I have seen so many kitchens in my days; and the pantry was always just outside, with small round holes bored in the door, and one big hole like a clover leaf— But there cannot be any pantry in the opera-house as they have no kitchen. [*Sings.*] Victoria!—Tell me, Madam, could she have gone out any other way?

The Portress. No, there is no other way.

The Officer. Well, then, I shall see her here.

[*STAGE PEOPLE rush out and are closely watched by THE OFFICER as they pass.*]

The Officer. Now she must soon be coming—Madam, that blue monk's-hood outside—I have seen it since I was a child. Is it the same?—I remember it from a country rectory where I stopped when I was seven years old— There are two doves, two blue doves, under the hood—but that time a bee came flying and went into the hood. Then I thought: now I have you! And I grabbed hold of the flower. But the sting of the bee went through it, and I cried—but then the rector's wife came and put damp dirt on the sting—and we had strawberries and cream for dinner— I think it is getting dark already. [*To THE BILLPOSTER.*] Where are you going?

The Billposter. Home for supper.

The Officer. [*Draws his hand across his eyes.*] Evening? At this time?—O, please, may I go in and telephone to the Growing Castle?

The Daughter. What do you want there?

The Officer. I am going to tell the Glazier to put in double windows, for it will soon be winter, and I am feeling horribly cold.

[*Goes into the gatekeeper's lodge.*]

The Daughter. Who is Miss Victoria?

The Portress. His sweetheart.

The Daughter. Right said! What she is to us and others matters nothing to him. And what she is to him, that alone is her real self.

[*It is suddenly turning dark.*]

The Portress. [*Lights a lantern.*] It is growing dark early today.

The Daughter. To the gods a year is as a minute.

The Portress. And to men a minute may be as long as a year.

The Officer. [*Enters again, looking dusty; the roses are withered.*] She has not come yet?

The Portress. No.

The Officer. But she will come— She

will come! [*Walks up and down.*] But come to think of it, perhaps I had better call off the dinner for all—as it is late? Yes, I will do that.

[*Goes back into the lodge and telephones.*]

The Portress. [*To THE DAUGHTER.*] Can I have my shawl back now?

The Daughter. No, dear, be free a while. I shall attend to your duties—for I want to study men and life, and see whether things really are as bad as they say.

The Portress. But it won't do to fall asleep here—never sleep night or day—

The Daughter. No sleep at night?

The Portress. Yes, if you are able to get it, but only with the bell string tied around the wrist—for there are night watchmen on the stage, and they have to be relieved every third hour.

The Daughter. But that is torture!

The Portress. So you think, but people like us are glad enough to get such a job, and if you only knew how envied I am—

The Daughter. Envied?—Envy for the tortured?

The Portress. Yes— But I can tell you what is harder than all drudging and keeping awake nights, harder to bear than draught and cold and dampness—it is to receive the confidences of all the unhappy people up there— They all come to me. Why? Perhaps they read in the wrinkles of my face some runes that are graved by suffering and that invite confessions— In that shawl, dear, lie hidden thirty years of my own and other people's agonies.

The Daughter. It is heavy, and it burns like nettles.

The Portress. As it is your wish, you may wear it. When it grows too burdensome, call me, and I shall relieve you.

The Daughter. Good-bye. What can be done by you ought not to surpass my strength.

The Portress. We shall see!—But be kind to my poor friends, and don't grow impatient of their complaints.

[*She disappears through the passageway.*]

[*Complete darkness covers the stage, and while it lasts the scene is changed so that the linden tree appears stripped of all its leaves. Soon the blue monk's-hood is withered, and when the light returns, the verdure in the open space beyond the passageway has changed into autumnal brown.*]

The Officer. [*Enters when it is light again. He has gray hair and a gray beard. His*

clothes are shabby, his collar is soiled and wrinkled. Nothing but the bare stems remain of the bunch of roses. He walks to and fro.]

To judge by all signs, Summer is gone and Fall has come. The linden shows it, and the monk's-hood also. [*Walks.*] But the Fall is my Spring, for then the opera begins again, and then she must come. Please, Madam, may I sit down a little on this chair?

The Daughter. Yes, sit down, friend—I am able to stand.

The Officer. [*Sits down.*] If I could only get some sleep, then I should feel better— [*He falls asleep for a few moments. Then he jumps up and walks back and forth again. Stops at last in front of the door with the clover leaf and pokes at it.*] This door here will not leave me any peace—what is behind it? There must be something. [*Faint dance music is heard from above.*] Oh, now the rehearsals have begun. [*The light goes out and flares up again, repeating this rhythmically as the rays of a lighthouse come and go.*] What does this mean? [*Speaking in time with the blinkings of the light.*] Light and dark—light and dark?

The Daughter. [*Imitating him.*] Night and day—night and day! A merciful Providence wants to shorten your wait. Therefore the days are flying in hot pursuit of the nights.

[*The light shines unbrokenly once more.*]

[*THE BILLPOSTER enters with his dipnet and his implements.*]

The Officer. There is the Billposter with his dipnet. Was the fishing good?

The Billposter. I should say so. The Summer was hot and a little long—the net turned out pretty good, but not as I had expected.

The Officer. [*With emphasis.*] Not as I had expected!—That is well said. Nothing ever was as I expected it to be—because the thought is more than the deed, more than the thing.

[*Walks to and fro, striking at the wall with the rose stems so that the last few leaves fall off.*]

The Billposter. Has she not come down yet?

The Officer. Not yet, but she will soon be here—Do you know what is behind that door, Billposter?

The Billposter. No, I have never seen that door open yet.

The Officer. I am going to telephone for a locksmith to come and open it.

[*Goes into the lodge.*]

[*THE BILLPOSTER posts a bill and goes toward the right.*]

The Daughter. What is the matter with the dipnet?

The Billposter. Matter? Well, I don't know as there is anything the matter with it—but it just didn't turn out as I had expected, and the pleasure of it was not so much after all.

The Daughter. How did you expect it to be?

The Billposter. How?—Well, I couldn't tell exactly—

The Daughter. I can tell you! You had expected it to be what it was not. It had to be green, but not that kind of green.

The Billposter. You have it, Madam. You understand it all—and that is why everybody goes to you with his worries. If you would only listen to me a little also—

The Daughter. Of course, I will!—Come in to me and pour out your heart.

[*She goes into the lodge.*]

[*THE BILLPOSTER remains outside, speaking to her.*]

[*The stage is darkened again. When the light is turned on, the tree has resumed its leaves, the monk's-hood is blooming once more, and the sun is shining on the green space beyond the passageway.*]

[*THE OFFICER enters. Now he is old and white-haired, ragged, and wearing worn-out shoes. He carries the bare remnants of the rose stems. Walks to and fro slowly, with the gait of an aged man. Reads on the posted bill.*]

[*A BALLET GIRL comes in from the right.*]

The Officer. Is Miss Victoria gone?

The Ballet Girl. No, she has not gone yet.

The Officer. Then I shall wait. She will be coming soon, don't you think?

The Ballet Girl. Oh, yes, I am sure.

The Officer. Don't go away now, for I have sent word to the locksmith, so you will soon see what is behind that door.

The Ballet Girl. Oh, it will be awfully interesting to see that door opened. That door, there, and the Growing Castle—have you heard of the Growing Castle?

The Officer. Have I?—I have been a prisoner in it.

The Ballet Girl. No, was that you? But why do they keep such a lot of horses there?

The Officer. Because it is a stable castle, don't you know.

The Ballet Girl. [*With confusion.*] How stupid of me not to guess that!

[*A MALE CHORUS SINGER enters from the right.*]

The Officer. Has Miss Victoria gone yet?

The Chorus Singer. [*Earnestly.*] No, she has not. She never goes away.

The Officer. That is because she loves me— See here, don't go before the locksmith comes to open the door here.

The Chorus Singer. No, is the door going to be opened? Well, that will be fun!—I just want to ask the Portress something.

[*THE PROMPTER enters from the right.*]

The Officer. Is Miss Victoria gone yet?

The Prompter. Not that I know of.

The Officer. Now, didn't I tell you she was waiting for me?—Don't go away, for the door is going to be opened.

The Prompter. Which door?

The Officer. Is there more than one door?

The Prompter. Oh, I know—that one with the clover leaf. Well, then, I have got to stay—I am only going to have a word with the Portress.

[*THE BALLET GIRL, THE CHORUS SINGER, and THE PROMPTER gather beside THE BILLPOSTER in front of the lodge window and talk by turns to THE DAUGHTER.*]

[*THE GLAZIER enters through the gate.*]

The Officer. Are you the locksmith?

The Glazier. No, the locksmith had visitors, and a glazier will do just as well.

The Officer. Yes, of course, of course—but did you bring your diamond along?

The Glazier. Why, certainly!—A glazier without his diamond, what would that be?

The Officer. Nothing at all!—Let us get to work then.

[*Claps his hands together. All gather in a ring around the door. MALE MEMBERS of the chorus dressed as Master Singers and BALLET GIRLS in costumes from the opera "Aida" enter from the right and join the rest.*]

The Officer. Locksmith—or glazier—do your duty!

[*THE GLAZIER goes up to the door with the diamond in his hand.*]

The Officer. A moment like this will not occur twice in a man's life. For this reason, my friends, I ask you—please consider carefully—

A Policeman. [*Enters.*] In the name of the law, I forbid the opening of that door!

The Officer. Oh, Lord! What a fuss there is as soon as anybody wants to do anything new or great. But we will take the matter into court—let us go to the Lawyer. Then we shall see whether the laws still exist or not— Come along to the Lawyer.

[*Without lowering of the curtain, the stage changes to a lawyer's office, and in this manner: The gate remains, but as a*

wicket in the railing running clear across the stage. The gatekeeper's lodge turns into the private enclosure of THE LAWYER, and it is now entirely open to the front. The linden, leafless, becomes a hat tree. The billboard is covered with legal notices and court decisions. The door with the four-leaved clover hole forms part of a document chest.]

[THE LAWYER, in evening dress and white necktie, is found sitting to the left, inside the gate, and in front of him stands a desk covered with papers. His appearance indicates enormous sufferings. His face is chalk-white and full of wrinkles, and its shadows have a purple effect. He is ugly, and his features seem to reflect all the crimes and vices with which he has been forced by his profession to come into contact. Of his two CLERKS, one has lost an arm, the other an eye.]

[THE PEOPLE gathered to witness "the opening of the door" remain as before, but they appear now to be waiting for an audience with THE LAWYER. Judging by their attitudes, one would think they had been standing there forever.]

[THE DAUGHTER, still wearing the shawl, and THE OFFICER are near the foot-lights.]

The Lawyer. [Goes over to THE DAUGHTER.] Tell me, sister, can I have that shawl? I shall keep it here until I have a fire in my grate, and then I shall burn it with all its miseries and sorrows.

The Daughter. Not yet, brother. I want it to hold all it possibly can, and I want it above all to take up your agonies—all the confidences you have received about crime, vice, robbery, slander, abuse—

The Lawyer. My dear girl, for such a purpose your shawl would prove totally insufficient. Look at these walls. Does it not look as if the wall-paper itself had been soiled by every conceivable sin? Look at these documents into which I write tales of wrong. Look at myself—No smiling man ever comes here; nothing is to be seen here but angry glances, snarling lips, clenched fists—And everybody pours his anger, his envy, his suspicions, upon me. Look—my hands are black, and no washing will clean them. See how they are chapped and bleeding—I can never wear my clothes more than a few days because they smell of other people's crimes—At times I have the place fumigated with sulphur, but it does not help. I sleep near by, and I dream of nothing but crimes—Just now I have a murder case in court—oh, I can

stand that, but do you know what is worse than anything else?—That is to separate married people! Then it is as if something cried way down in the earth and up there in the sky—as if it cried treason against the primal force, against the source of all good, against love—And do you know, when reams of paper have been filled with mutual accusations, and at last a sympathetic person takes one of the two apart and asks, with a pinch of the ear or a smile, the simple question: what have you really got against your husband?—or your wife?—then he, or she, stands perplexed and cannot give the cause. Once—well, I think a lettuce salad was the principal issue; another time it was just a word—mostly it is nothing at all. But the tortures, the sufferings—these I have to bear—See how I look! Do you think I could ever win a woman's love with this countenance so like a criminal's? Do you think anybody dares to be friendly with me, who have to collect all the debts, all the money obligations, of the whole city?—It is a misery to be man!

The Daughter. Men are to be pitied!

The Lawyer. They are. And what people are living on puzzles me. They marry on an income of two thousand, when they need four thousand. They borrow, of course—everybody borrows. In some sort of happy-go-lucky fashion, by the skin of their teeth, they manage to pull through—and thus it continues to the end, when the estate is found to be bankrupt. Who pays for it at last no one can tell.

The Daughter. Perhaps He who feeds the birds.

The Lawyer. Perhaps. But if He who feeds the birds would only pay a visit to this earth of His and see for Himself how the poor human creatures fare—then His heart would surely fill with compassion.

The Daughter. Men are to be pitied!

The Lawyer. Yes, that is the truth!—[To THE OFFICER.] What do you want?

The Officer. I just wanted to ask if Miss Victoria has gone yet.

The Lawyer. No, she has not; you can be sure of it—Why are you poking at my chest over there?

The Officer. I thought the door of it looked exactly—

The Lawyer. Not at all! Not at all!

[All the church bells begin to ring.]

The Officer. Is there going to be a funeral?

The Lawyer. No, it is graduation day—a number of degrees will be conferred, and I am going to be made a Doctor of Laws. Per-

haps you would also like to be graduated and receive a laurel wreath?

The Officer. Yes, why not? That would be a diversion, at least.

The Lawyer. Perhaps then we may begin upon this solemn function at once— But you had better go home and change your clothes.

[*THE OFFICER goes out.*]

[*The stage is darkened and the following changes are made. The railing stays, but it encloses now the chancel of a church. The billboard displays hymn numbers. The linden hat tree becomes a candelabrum. THE LAWYER'S desk is turned into the desk of the presiding functionary, and the door with the clover leaf leads to the vestry.*]

[*The chorus of MASTER SINGERS become heralds with staffs, and the BALLET GIRLS carry laurel wreaths. The rest of the PEOPLE act as spectators.*]

[*The background is raised, and the new one thus discovered represents a large church organ, with the keyboards below and the organist's mirror above.*]

[*Music is heard. At the sides stand figures symbolizing the four academic faculties: Philosophy, Theology, Medicine, and Jurisprudence.*]

[*At first the stage is empty for a few moments.*]

[*HERALDS enter from the right. BALLET GIRLS follow with laurel wreaths carried high before them. THREE GRADUATES appear one after another from the left, receive their wreaths from the BALLET GIRLS, and go out to the right. THE LAWYER steps forward to get his wreath. The BALLET GIRLS turn away from him and refuse to place the wreath on his head. Then they withdraw from the stage. THE LAWYER, shocked, leans against a column. All the others withdraw gradually until only THE LAWYER remains on the stage.*]

The Daughter. [*Enters, her head and shoulders covered by a white veil.*] Do you see, I have washed the shawl! But why are you standing there? Did you get your wreath?

The Lawyer. No, I was not held worthy.

The Daughter. Why? Because you have defended the poor, put in a good word for the wrong-doers, made the burden easier for the guilty, obtained a respite for the condemned? Woe upon men: they are not angels—but they are to be pitied!

The Lawyer. Say nothing evil of men—for after all it is my task to voice their side.

The Daughter. [*Leaning against the organ.*] Why do they strike their friends in the face?

The Lawyer. They know no better.

The Daughter. Let us enlighten them. Will you try? Together with me?

The Lawyer. They do not accept enlightenment— Oh, that our plaint might reach the gods of heaven!

The Daughter. It shall reach the throne— [*Turns toward the organ.*] Do you know what I see in this mirror?—The world turned the right way!—Yes indeed, for naturally we see it upside down.

The Lawyer. How did it come to be turned the wrong way?

The Daughter. When the copy was taken—

The Lawyer. You have said it! The copy—I have always had the feeling that it was a spoiled copy. And when I began to recall the original images, I grew dissatisfied with everything. But men called it sore-headedness, looking at the world through the devil's eyes, and other such things.

The Daughter. It is certainly a crazy world! Look at the four faculties here. The government, to which has fallen the task of preserving society, supports all four of them. Theology, the science of God, is constantly attacked and ridiculed by philosophy, which declares itself to be the sum of all wisdom. And medicine is always challenging philosophy, while refusing entirely to count theology a science and even insisting on calling it a mere superstition. And they belong to a common Academic Council, which has been set to teach the young respect—for the university. It is a bedlam. And woe unto him who first recovers his reason!

The Lawyer. Those who find it out first are the theologians. As a preparatory study, they take philosophy, which teaches them that theology is nonsense. Later they learn from theology that philosophy is nonsense. Madmen, I should say!

The Daughter. And then there is jurisprudence which serves all but the servants.

The Lawyer. Justice, which, when it wants to do right, becomes the undoing of men. Equity, which so often turns into iniquity!

The Daughter. What a mess you have made of it, you man-children. Children, indeed!—Come here, and I will give you a wreath—one that is more becoming to you. [*Puts a crown of thorns on his head.*] And now I will play for you.

[*She sits down at the keyboards, but instead of organ-notes human voices are heard.*]

Voices of Children. O Lord everlasting!

[*Last note sustained.*]

Voices of Women. Have mercy upon us!

[*Last note sustained.*]

Voices of Men. [*Tenors.*] Save us for Thy mercy's sake!

[*Last note sustained.*]

Voices of Men. [*Basses.*] Spare Thy Children, O Lord, and deliver us from Thy wrath!

All. Have mercy upon us! Hear us! Have pity upon the mortals!—O Lord eternal, why art Thou afar?—Out of the depths we call unto Thee: Make not the burden of Thy children too heavy! Hear us! Hear us!

[*The stage turns dark. The DAUGHTER rises and draws close to THE LAWYER. By a change of light, the organ becomes Fingal's Cave. The ground-swell of the ocean, which can be seen rising and falling between the columns of basalt, produces a deep harmony that blends the music of winds and waves.*]

The Lawyer. Where are we, sister?

The Daughter. What do you hear?

The Lawyer. I hear drops falling—

The Daughter. Those are the tears that men are weeping— What more do you hear?

The Lawyer. There is sighing—and whining—and wailing—

The Daughter. Hither the plaint of the mortals has reached—and no farther. But why this never-ending wailing? Is there then nothing in life to rejoice at?

The Lawyer. Yes, what is most sweet, and what is also most bitter—love—wife and home—the highest and the lowest!

The Daughter. May I try it?

The Lawyer. With me?

The Daughter. With you— You know the rocks, the stumbling-stones. Let us avoid them.

The Lawyer. I am so poor.

The Daughter. What does that matter if we only love each other? And a little beauty costs nothing.

The Lawyer. I have dislikes which may prove your likes.

The Daughter. They can be adjusted.

The Lawyer. And if we tire of it?

The Daughter. Then come the children and bring with them a diversion that remains for ever new.

The Lawyer. You, you will take me, poor and ugly, scorned and rejected?

The Daughter. Yes—let us unite our destinies.

The Lawyer. So be it then!

An extremely plain room inside THE LAWYER'S office. To the right, a big double bed covered by a canopy and curtained in. Next to it, a window. To the left, an iron heater with cooking utensils on top of it.

[CHRISTINE is pasting paper strips along the cracks of the double windows. In the background, an open door to the office. Through the door are visible a number of poor CLIENTS waiting for admission.]

Christine. I paste, I paste.

The Daughter. [*Pale and emaciated, sits by the stove.*] You shut out all the air. I choke!

Christine. Now there is only one little crack left.

The Daughter. Air, air—I cannot breathe!

Christine. I paste, I paste.

The Lawyer. That's right, Christine! Heat is expensive.

The Daughter. Oh, it feels as if my lips were being glued together.

The Lawyer. [*Standing in the doorway, with a paper in his hand.*] Is the child asleep?

The Daughter. Yes, at last.

The Lawyer. [*Gently.*] All this crying scares away my clients.

The Daughter. [*Pleasantly.*] What can be done about it?

The Lawyer. Nothing.

The Daughter. We shall have to get a larger place.

The Lawyer. We have no money for it.

The Daughter. May I open the window—this bad air is suffocating.

The Lawyer. Then the heat escapes, and we shall be cold.

The Daughter. It is horrible!—May we clean up out there?

The Lawyer. You have not the strength to do any cleaning, nor have I; and Christine must paste. She must put strips through the whole house, on every crack, in the ceiling, in the floor, in the walls.

The Daughter. Poverty I was prepared for, but not for dirt.

The Lawyer. Poverty is always dirty, relatively speaking.

The Daughter. This is worse than I dreamed!

The Lawyer. We are not the worst off by far. There is still food in the pot.

The Daughter. But what sort of food?

The Lawyer. Cabbage is cheap, nourishing, and good to eat.

The Daughter. For those who like cabbage—to me it is repulsive.

The Lawyer. Why didn't you say so?

CURTAIN

The Daughter. Because I loved you, I wanted to sacrifice my own taste.

The Lawyer. Then I must sacrifice my taste for cabbage to you—for sacrifices must be mutual.

The Daughter. What are we to eat, then? Fish? But you hate fish.

The Lawyer. And it is expensive.

The Daughter. This is worse than I thought it!

The Lawyer. [Kindly.] Yes, you see how hard it is—And the child that was to become a link and a blessing—it becomes our ruin.

The Daughter. Dearest, I die in this air, in this room, with its backyard view, with its baby cries and endless hours of sleeplessness, with those people out there, and their whinings, and bickerings, and incriminations—I shall die here!

The Lawyer. My poor little flower, that has no light and no air—

The Daughter. And you say that people exist who are still worse off?

The Lawyer. I belong with the envied ones in this locality.

The Daughter. Everything else might be borne, if I could only have some beauty in my home.

The Lawyer. I know you are thinking of flowers—and especially of heliotropes—but a plant costs half a dollar, which will buy us six quarts of milk or a peck of potatoes.

The Daughter. I could gladly get along without food, if I could only have some flowers.

The Lawyer. There is a kind of beauty that costs nothing—but the absence of it in the home is worse than any other torture to a man with a sense for the beautiful.

The Daughter. What is it?

The Lawyer. If I tell, you will get angry.

The Daughter. We have agreed not to get angry.

The Lawyer. We have agreed—Everything can be overcome, Agnes, except the short, sharp accents—Do you know them? Not yet!

The Daughter. They will never be heard between us.

The Lawyer. Not as far as it lies in me!

The Daughter. Tell me now.

The Lawyer. Well—when I come into a room, I look first of all at the curtains—[Goes over to the window and straightens out the curtains.] If they hang like ropes or rags, then I leave soon. And next I take a glance at the chairs—if they stand straight along the wall, then I stay. [Puts a chair back against the wall.] Finally I look at the

candles in their sticks—if they point this way and that, then the whole house is askew. [Straightens up a candle on the chest of drawers.] This is the kind of beauty, dear heart, that costs nothing.

The Daughter. [With bent head.] Beware of the short accents, Axel!

The Lawyer. They were not short.

The Daughter. Yes, they were.

The Lawyer. Well, I'll be—

The Daughter. What kind of language is that?

The Lawyer. Pardon me, Agnes! But I have suffered as much from your lack of orderliness as you have suffered from dirt. And I have not dared to set things right myself, for when I do so, you get as angry as if I were reproaching you—ugh! Hadn't we better quit now?

The Daughter. It is very difficult to be married—it is more difficult than anything else. One has to be an angel, I think!

The Lawyer. I think so, too.

The Daughter. I fear I shall begin to hate you after this!

The Lawyer. Woe to us then!—But let us forestall hatred. I promise never again to speak of any untidiness—although it is torture to me!

The Daughter. And I shall eat cabbage though it means agony to me.

The Lawyer. A life of common suffering, then! One's pleasure, the other one's pain!

The Daughter. Men are to be pitied!

The Lawyer. You see that?

The Daughter. Yes, but for heaven's sake, let us avoid the rocks, now when we know them so well.

The Lawyer. Let us try! Are we not decent and intelligent persons? Able to forbear and forgive?

The Daughter. Why not smile at mere trifles?

The Lawyer. We—only we—can do so. Do you know, I read this morning—by the bye, where is the newspaper?

The Daughter. [Embarrassed.] Which newspaper?

The Lawyer. [Sharply.] Do I keep more than one?

The Daughter. Smile now, and don't speak sharply—I used your paper to make the fire with—

The Lawyer. [Violently.] Well, I'll be damned!

The Daughter. Why don't you smile?—I burned it because it ridiculed what is holy to me.

The Lawyer. Which is unholy to me! Yah! [Strikes one clenched fist against the open

palm of the other hand.] I smile, I smile so that my wisdom teeth show— Of course, I am to be nice, and I am to swallow my own opinions, and say yes to everything, and cringe and dissemble! [*Tidies the curtains around the bed.*] That's it! Now I am going to fix things until you get angry again— Agnes, this is simply impossible!

The Daughter. Of course it is!

The Lawyer. And yet we must endure—not for the sake of our promises, but for the sake of the child!

The Daughter. You are right—for the sake of the child. Oh, oh—we have to endure!

The Lawyer. And now I must go out to my clients. Listen to them—how they growl with impatience to tear each other, to get each other fined and jailed—Lost souls!

The Daughter. Poor, poor people! And this pasting!

[*She drops her head forward in dumb despair.*]

Christine. I paste, I paste.

[*THE LAWYER stands at the door, twisting the doorknob nervously.*]

The Daughter. How that knob squeaks! It is as if you were twisting my heart-strings—

The Lawyer. I twist, I twist!

The Daughter. Don't!

The Lawyer. I twist!

The Daughter. No!

The Lawyer. I—

The Officer. [*In the office, on the other side of the door, takes hold of the knob.*] Will you permit me?

The Lawyer. [*Lets go his hold.*] By all means. Seeing that you have your degree!

The Officer. Now all life belongs to me. Every road lies open. I have mounted Parnassus. The laurel is won. Immortality, fame, all is mine!

The Lawyer. And what are you going to live on?

The Officer. Live on?

The Lawyer. You must have a home, clothes, food—

The Officer. Oh, that will come—if you can only find somebody to love you!

The Lawyer. You don't say so!—You don't— Paste, Christine, paste until they cannot breathe!

[*Goes out backward, nodding.*]

Christine. I paste, I paste—until they cannot breathe.

The Officer. Will you come with me now?

The Daughter. At once! But where?

The Officer. To Fairhaven. There it is summer; there the sun is shining; there we

find youth, children, and flowers, singing and dancing, feasting and frolicking.

The Daughter. Then I will go there.

The Officer. Come!

The Lawyer. [*Enters again.*] Now I go back to my first hell—this was the second and greater. The sweeter the hell, the greater— And look here, now she has been dropping hair-pins on the floor again.

[*He picks up some hair-pins.*]

The Officer. My! but he has discovered the pins also.

The Lawyer. Also?—Look at this one. You see two prongs, but it is only one pin. It is two, yet only one. If I bend it open, it is a single piece. If I bend it back, there are two, but they remain one for all that. It means: these two are one. But if I break—like this!—then they become two.

[*Breaks the pin and throws the pieces away.*]

The Officer. All that he has seen!—But before breaking, the prongs must diverge. If they point together, then it holds.

The Lawyer. And if they are parallel, then they will never meet—and it neither breaks nor holds.

The Officer. The hair-pin is the most perfect of all created things. A straight line which equals two parallel ones.

The Lawyer. A lock that shuts when it is open.

The Officer. And thus shuts in a braid of hair that opens up when the lock shuts.

The Lawyer. It is like this door. When I close it, then I open—the way out—for you, Agnes!

[*Withdraws and closes the door behind him.*]

The Daughter. Well then?

[*The stage changes. The bed with its curtains becomes a tent. The stove stays as it was. The background is raised. To the right, in the foreground, are seen hills stripped of their trees by fire, and red heather growing between the blackened tree stumps. Red-painted pig-sties and outhouses. Beyond these, in the open, apparatus for mechanical gymnastics, where sick persons are being treated on machines resembling instruments of torture. To the left, in the foreground, the quarantine station, consisting of open sheds, with ovens, furnaces, and pipe coils. In the middle distance, a narrow strait. The background shows a beautiful wooded shore. Flags are flying on its piers, where ride white sailboats, some with sails set and some without. Little Italian villas, pavilions, arbors,*

marble statues are glimpsed through the foliage along the shore.]

[THE MASTER OF QUARANTINE, made up like a blackamoor, is walking along the shore.]

The Officer. [Meets him and they shake hands.] Why Ordström! ¹ Have you landed here?

Master of Q. Yes, here I am.

The Officer. Is this Fairhaven?

Master of Q. No, that is on the other side. This is Foulstrand.

The Officer. Then we have lost our way.

Master of Q. We?—Won't you introduce me?

The Officer. No, that wouldn't do. [In a lowered voice.] It is Indra's own daughter.

Master of Q. Indra's? And I was thinking of Varuna ² himself— Well, are you not surprised to find me black in the face?

The Officer. I am past fifty, my boy, and at that age one has ceased to be surprised. I concluded at once that you were bound for some fancy ball this afternoon.

Master of Q. Right you were! And I hope both of you will come along.

The Officer. Why, yes—for I must say—the place does not look very tempting. What kind of people live here anyhow?

Master of Q. Here you find the sick; over there, the healthy.

The Officer. Nothing but poor folk on this side, I suppose.

Master of Q. No, my boy, it is here you find the rich. Look at that one on the rack. He has stuffed himself with *paté de foie gras* and truffles and Burgundy until his feet have grown knotted.

The Officer. Knotted?

Master of Q. Yes, he has a case of knotted feet. And that one who lies under the guillotine—he has swilled brandy so that his backbone has to be put through the mangle.

The Officer. There is always something amiss!

Master of Q. Moreover, everybody living on this side has some kind of canker to hide. Look at the fellow coming here, for instance.

[An old DANDY is pushed on the stage in a wheel-chair. He is accompanied by a gaunt and grisly COQUETTE in the sixties, to whom THE FRIEND, a man of about forty, is paying court.]

The Officer. It is the major—our school-mate!

Master of Q. Don Juan. Can you see that he is still enamored of that old spectre beside him? He does not notice that she has grown old, or that she is ugly, faithless, cruel.

The Officer. Why, that is love! And I couldn't have dreamt that a fickle fellow like him would prove capable of loving so deeply and so earnestly.

Master of Q. That is a mighty decent way of looking at it.

The Officer. I have been in love with Victoria myself—in fact I am still waiting for her in the passageway—

Master of Q. Oh, you are the fellow who is waiting in the passageway?

The Officer. I am the man.

Master of Q. Well, have you got that door opened yet?

The Officer. No, the case is still in court — The Billposter is out with his dipnet, of course, so that the taking of evidence is always being put off—and in the meantime the Glazier has mended all the window panes in the castle, which has grown half a story higher— This has been an uncommonly good year—warm and wet—

Master of Q. But just the same you have had no heat comparing with what I have here.

The Officer. How much do you have in your ovens?

Master of Q. When we fumigate cholera suspects, we run it up to one hundred and forty degrees.

The Officer. Is the cholera going again?

Master of Q. Don't you know that?

The Officer. Of course, I know it, but I forget so often what I know.

Master of Q. I wish often that I could forget—especially myself. That is why I go in for masquerades and carnivals and amateur theatricals.

The Officer. What have you been up to, then?

Master of Q. If I told, they would say that I was boasting; and if I don't tell, then they call me a hypocrite.

The Officer. That is why you blackened your face?

Master of Q. Exactly—making myself a shade blacker than I am.

The Officer. Who is coming here?

Master of Q. Oh, a poet who is going to have his mud bath.

[THE POET enters with his eyes raised toward the sky and carrying a pail of mud in one hand.]

The Officer. Why, he ought to be having light baths and air baths.

¹ Means literally "wordspout."

² The Hindu god of the ocean.

Master of Q. No, he is roaming about the higher region so much that he gets homesick for the mud—and wallowing in the mire makes the skin callous like that of a pig. Then he cannot feel the stings of the wasps.

The Officer. This is a queer world, full of contradictions.

The Poet. [*Ecstatically.*] Man was created by the god Phtah out of clay on a potter's wheel, or a lathe— [*Sceptically.*] or any damned old thing! [*Ecstatically.*] Out of clay does the sculptor create his more or less immortal masterpieces— [*Sceptically.*] which mostly are pure rot. [*Ecstatically.*] Out of clay they make those utensils which are so indispensable in the pantry and which generically are named pots and plates— [*Sceptically.*] but what in thunder does it matter to me what they are called anyhow? [*Ecstatically.*] Such is the clay! When clay becomes fluid, it is called mud— *C'est mon affaire!*— [*Shouts.*] Lena!

[*LENA enters with a pail in her hand.*]

The Poet. Lena, show yourself to Miss Agnes— She knew you ten years ago, when you were a young, happy and, let us say, pretty girl— Behold how she looks now. Five children, drudgery, baby-cries, hunger, ill-treatment. See how beauty has perished and joy vanished in the fulfilment of duties which should have brought that inner satisfaction which makes each line in the face harmonious and fills the eye with a quiet glow.

Master of Q. [*Covering THE POET'S mouth with his hand.*] Shut up! Shut up!

The Poet. That is what they all say. And if you keep silent, then they cry: speak! Oh, restless humanity!

The Daughter. [*Goes to LENA.*] Tell me your troubles.

Lena. No, I dare not, for then they will be made worse.

The Daughter. Who could be so cruel?

Lena. I dare not tell, for if I do, I shall be spanked.

The Poet. That is just what will happen. But I will speak, even though the blackamoor knock out all my teeth—I will tell that justice is not always done—Agnes, daughter of the gods, do you hear music and dancing on the hill over there?—Well, it is Lena's sister who has come home from the city where she went astray—you understand? Now they are killing the fatted calf; but Lena, who stayed at home, has to carry slop pails and feed the pigs.

The Daughter. There is rejoicing at home because the stray has left the paths of evil,

and not merely because she has come back. Bear that in mind.

The Poet. But then they should give a ball and banquet every night for the spotless worker that never strayed into paths of error— Yet they do nothing of the kind, but when Lena has a free moment, she is sent to prayer-meetings where she has to hear reproaches for not being perfect. Is this justice?

The Daughter. Your question is so difficult to answer because— There are so many unforeseen cases—

The Poet. That much the Caliph, Haroun the Just, came to understand. He was sitting on his throne, and from its height he could never make out what happened below. At last complaints penetrated to his exalted ears. And then, one fine day, he disguised himself and descended unobserved among the crowds to find out what kind of justice they were getting.

The Daughter. I hope you don't take me for Haroun the Just!

The Officer. Let us talk of something else— Here come visitors.

[*A white boat, shaped like a viking ship, with a dragon for figure-head, with a pale-blue silken sail on a gilded yard, and with a rose-red standard flying from the top of a gilded mast, glides through the strait from the left. HE and SHE are seated in the stern with their arms around each other.*]

The Officer. Behold perfect happiness, bliss without limits, young love's rejoicing!

[*The stage grows brighter.*]

He. [*Stands up in the boat and sings.*]

Hail, beautiful haven,

Where the Springs of my youth were spent,

Where my first sweet dreams were dreamt—

To thee I return

But lonely no longer!

Ye hills and groves,

Thou sky o'erhead,

Thou mirroring sea,

Give greeting to her:

My love, my bride,

My light and my life!

[*The flags at the landings of Fairhaven are dipped in salute; white handkerchiefs are waved from verandahs and boats, and the air is filled with tender chords from harps and violins.*]

The Poet. See the light that surrounds

them! Hear how the air is ringing with music!—Eros!

The Officer. It is Victoria.

Master of Q. Well, what of it?

The Officer. It is his Victoria— My own is still mine. And nobody can see her— Now you hoist the quarantine flag, and I shall pull in the net.

[THE MASTER OF QUARANTINE waves a yellow flag.]

The Officer. [Pulling a rope that turns the boat toward Foulstrand.] Hold on there!

[HE and SHE become aware of the hideous view and give vent to their horror.]

Master of Q. Yes, it comes hard. But here every one must stop who hails from plague-stricken places.

The Poet. The idea of speaking in such manner, or acting in such a way, in the presence of two human beings united in love! Touch them not! Lay not hands on love! It is treason— Woe to us! Everything beautiful must now be dragged down—dragged into the mud!

[HE and SHE step ashore, looking sad and shamefaced.]

He. Woe to us! What have we done?

Master of Q. It is not necessary to have done anything in order to encounter life's little pricks.

She. So short-lived are joy and happiness!

He. How long must we stay here?

Master of Q. Forty days and nights.

She. Then rather into the water!

He. To live here—among blackened hills and pig-sties?

The Poet. Love overcomes all, even sulphur fumes and carbolic acid.

Master of Q. [Starts a fire in the stove; blue, sulphurous flames break forth.] Now I set the sulphur going. Will you please step in?

She. Oh, my blue dress will fade.

Master of Q. And become white. So your roses will also turn white in time.

He. Even your cheeks—in forty days!

She. [To THE OFFICER.] That will please you.

The Officer. No, it will not!—Of course, your happiness was the cause of my suffering, but—it doesn't matter—for I am graduated and have obtained a position over there—heigh-ho and alas! And in the Fall I shall be teaching school—teaching boys the same lessons I myself learned during my childhood and youth—the same lessons throughout my manhood and, finally, in my old age—the self-same lessons! What does twice two make? How many times can four be evenly divided by two?—Until I get a pen-

sion and can do nothing at all—just wait around for meals and the newspapers—until at last I am carted to the crematorium and burned to ashes— Have you nobody here who is entitled to a pension? Barring twice two makes four, it is probably the worst thing of all—to begin school all over again when one already is graduated; to ask the same questions until death comes—

[AN ELDERLY MAN goes by, with his hands folded behind his back.]

The Officer. There is a pensioner now, waiting for himself to die. I think he must be a captain who missed the rank of major; or an assistant judge who was not made a chief justice. Many are called but few are chosen— He is waiting for his breakfast now.

The Pensioner. No, for the newspaper—the morning paper.

The Officer. And he is only fifty-four years old. He may spend twenty-five more years waiting for meals and newspapers—is it not dreadful?

The Pensioner. What is not dreadful? Tell me, tell me!

The Officer. Tell that who can!—Now I shall have to teach boys that twice two makes four. And how many times four can be evenly divided by two. [HE clutches his head in despair.] And Victoria, whom I loved and therefore wished all the happiness life can give—now she has her happiness, the greatest one known to her, and for this reason I suffer—suffer, suffer!

She. Do you think I can be happy when I see you suffering? How can you think it? Perhaps it will soothe your pains that I am to be imprisoned here for forty days and nights? Tell me, does it soothe your pains?

The Officer. Yes and no. How can I enjoy seeing you suffer? Oh!

She. And do you think my happiness can be founded on your torments?

The Officer. We are to be pitied—all of us!

All. [Raise their arms toward the sky and utter a cry of anguish that sounds like a dissonant chord.] Oh!

The Daughter. Everlasting One, hear them! Life is evil! Men are to be pitied!

All. [As before.] Oh!

[For a moment the stage is completely darkened, and during that moment EVERYBODY withdraws or takes up a new position. When the light is turned on again, Foulstrand is seen in the background, lying in deep shadow. The strait is in the middle distance and Fairhaven in the foreground, both steeped

in light. To the right, a corner of the Casino, where DANCING COUPLES are visible through the open windows. THREE SERVANT MAIDS are standing outside on top of an empty box, with arms around each other, staring at the dancers within. On the verandah of the Casino stands a bench, where "PLAIN" EDITH is sitting. She is bareheaded, with an abundance of tousled hair, and looks sad. In front of her is an open piano. To the left, a frame house painted yellow. Two CHILDREN in light dresses are playing ball outside. In the centre of the middle distance, a pier with white sailboats tied to it, and flag poles with hoisted flags. In the strait is anchored a naval vessel, brig-rigged, with gun ports. But the entire landscape is in winter dress, with snow on the ground and on the bare trees.]

[THE DAUGHTER and THE OFFICER enter.]

The Daughter. Here is peace, and happiness, and leisure. No more toil; every day a holiday; everybody dressed up in his best; dancing and music in the early morning. [To THE MAIDS.] Why don't you go in and have a dance, girls?

The Maids. We?

The Officer. They are servants, don't you see!

The Daughter. Of course!—But why is Edith sitting there instead of dancing?

[EDITH buries her face in her hands.]

The Officer. Don't question her! She has been sitting there three hours without being asked for a dance.

[Goes into the yellow house on the left.]

The Daughter. What a cruel form of amusement!

The Mother. [In a low-necked dress, enters from the Casino and goes up to EDITH.] Why don't you go in as I told you?

Edith. Because—I cannot throw myself at them. That I am ugly I know, and I know that nobody wants to dance with me, but I might be spared from being reminded of it.

[Begins to play on the piano a Toccata con fuga by Sebastian Bach.]

[The waltz music from within is heard faintly at first. Then it grows in strength, as if to compete with the Bach Toccata. EDITH prevails over it and brings it to silence. DANCERS appear in the doorway to hear her play. EVERYBODY on the stage stands still and listens reverently.]

A Naval Officer. [Takes ALICE, one of the

dancers, around the waist and drags her toward the pier.] Come quick!

[EDITH breaks off abruptly, rises and stares at the COUPLE with an expression of utter despair; stands as if turned to stone.]

[Now the front wall of the yellow house disappears, revealing three benches full of SCHOOLBOYS. Among these THE OFFICER is seen, looking worried and depressed. In front of the BOYS stands THE TEACHER, bespectacled and holding a piece of chalk in one hand, a rattan cane in the other.]

The Teacher. [To THE OFFICER.] Well, my boy, can you tell me what twice two makes?

[THE OFFICER remains seated while he racks his mind without finding an answer.]

The Teacher. You must rise when I ask you a question.

The Officer. [Harassed, rises.] Two—twice—let me see. That makes two-two.

The Teacher. I see! You have not studied your lesson.

The Officer. [Ashamed.] Yes, I have, but—I know the answer, but I cannot tell it—

The Teacher. You want to wriggle out of it, of course. You know it, but you cannot tell. Perhaps I may help you.

[Pulls his hair.]

The Officer. Oh, it is dreadful, it is dreadful!

The Teacher. Yes, it is dreadful that such a big boy lacks all ambition—

The Officer. [Hurt.] Big boy—yes, I am big—bigger than all these others—I am full-grown, I am done with school— [As if waking up.] I have graduated—why am I then sitting here? Have I not received my doctor's degree?

The Teacher. Certainly, but you are to sit here and mature, you know. You have to mature—isn't that so?

The Officer. [Feels his forehead.] Yes, that is right, one must mature— Twice two—makes two—and this I can demonstrate by analogy, which is the highest form of all reasoning. Listen!—Once one makes one; consequently twice two must make two. For what applies in one case must also apply in another.

The Teacher. Your conclusion is based on good logic, but your answer is wrong.

The Officer. What is logical cannot be wrong. Let us test it. One divided by one gives one, so that two divided by two must give two.

The Teacher. Correct according to anal-

ogy. But how much does once three make?

The Officer. Three, of course.

The Teacher. Consequently twice three must also make three.

The Officer. [*Pondering.*] No, that cannot be right—it cannot—or else— [*Sits down dejectedly.*] No, I am not mature yet.

The Teacher. No, indeed, you are far from mature.

The Officer. But how long am I to sit here, then?

The Teacher. Here—how long? Do you believe that time and space exist?—Suppose that time does exist, then you should be able to say what time is. What is time?

The Officer. Time— [*Thinks.*] I cannot tell, but I know what it is. Consequently I may also know what twice two is without being able to tell it. And teacher, can you tell what time is?

The Teacher. Of course I can.

All the Boys. Tell us then!

The Teacher. Time—let me see. [*Stands immovable with one finger on his nose.*] While we are talking, time flies. Consequently time is something that flies while we talk.

A Boy. [*Rising.*] Now you are talking, teacher, and while you are talking, I fly; consequently I am time. [*Runs out.*]

The Teacher. That accords completely with the laws of logic.

The Officer. Then the laws of logic are silly, for Nils, who ran away, cannot be time.

The Teacher. That is also good logic, although it is silly.

The Officer. Then logic itself is silly.

The Teacher. So it seems. But if logic is silly, then all the world is silly—and then the devil himself wouldn't stay here to teach you more silliness. If anybody treats me to a drink, we'll go and take a bath.

The Officer. That is a *posterus prius*, or the world turned upside down, for it is customary to bathe first and have a drink afterward. Old foggy!

The Teacher. Beware of a swelled head, doctor!

The Officer. Call me captain, if you please. I am an officer, and I cannot understand why I should be sitting here to get scolded like a schoolboy—

The Teacher. [*With raised index finger.*] We were to mature!

Master of Q. [*Enters.*] The quarantine begins.

The Officer. Oh, there you are. Just think of it, this fellow makes me sit among the boys although I am graduated.

Master of Q. Well, why don't you go away?

The Officer. Heaven knows!—Go away? Why, that is no easy thing to do.

The Teacher. I guess not—just try!

The Officer. [*To MASTER OF QUARANTINE.*] Save me! Save me from his eye!

Master of Q. Come on. Come and help us dance— We have to dance before the plague breaks out. We must!

The Officer. Is the brig leaving?

Master of Q. Yes, first of all the brig must leave— Then there will be a lot of tears shed, of course.

The Officer. Always tears; when she comes and when she goes— Let us get out of here.

[*They go out. THE TEACHER continues his lesson in silence.*]

[*THE MAIDS that were staring through the window of the dance hall walk sadly down to the pier. EDITH, who has been standing like a statue at the piano, follows them.*]

The Daughter. [*To THE OFFICER.*] Is there not one happy person to be found in this paradise?

The Officer. Yes, there is a newly married couple. Just watch them.

[*THE NEWLY MARRIED COUPLE enter.*]

Husband. [*To his WIFE.*] My joy has no limits, and I could now wish to die—

Wife. Why die?

Husband. Because at the heart of happiness grows the seed of disaster. Happiness devours itself like a flame—it cannot burn for ever, but must go out some time. And this presentiment of the coming end destroys joy in the very hour of its culmination.

Wife. Let us then die together—this moment!

Husband. Die? All right! For I fear happiness—that cheat!

[*They go toward the water.*]

The Daughter. Life is evil! Men are to be pitied!

The Officer. Look at this fellow. He is the most envied mortal in this neighborhood.

[*THE BLIND MAN is led in.*]

The Officer. He is the owner of these hundred or more Italian villas. He owns all these bays, straits, shores, forests, together with the fishes in the water, the birds in the air, the game in the woods. These thousand or more people are his tenants. The sun rises upon his sea and sets upon his land—

The Daughter. Well—is he complaining also?

The Officer. Yes, and with right, for he cannot see.

Master of Q. He is blind.

The Daughter. The most envied of all!

The Officer. Now he has come to see the brig depart with his son on board.

The Blind Man. I cannot see, but I hear. I hear the anchor bill claw the clay bottom as when the hook is torn out of a fish and brings up the heart with it through the neck— My son, my only child, is going to journey across the wide sea to foreign lands, and I can follow him only in my thought! Now I hear the clanking of the chain—and—there is something that snaps and cracks like clothes drying on a line—wet handkerchiefs perhaps. And I hear it blubber and snivel as when people are weeping—maybe the splashing of the wavelets among the seines—or maybe girls along the shore, deserted and disconsolate— Once I asked a child why the ocean is salt, and the child, who had a father on a long trip across the high seas, said immediately: the ocean is salt because the sailors shed so many tears into it. And why do the sailors cry so much then?—Because they are always going away, replied the child; and that is why they are always drying their handkerchiefs in the rigging— And why does man weep when he is sad? I asked at last— Because the glass in the eyes must be washed now and then, so that we can see clearly, said the child.

[The brig has set sail and is gliding off. THE GIRLS along the shore are alternately waving their handkerchiefs and wiping off their tears with them. Then a signal is set on the foremast—a red ball in a white field, meaning "yes." In response to it ALICE waves her handkerchief triumphantly.]

The Daughter. [To THE OFFICER.] What is the meaning of that flag?

The Officer. It means "yes." It is the lieutenant's troth—red as the red blood of the arteries, set against the blue cloth of the sky.

The Daughter. And how does "no" look?

The Officer. It is blue as the spoiled blood in the veins—but look, how jubilant Alice is.

The Daughter. And how Edith cries.

The Blind Man. Meet and part. Part and meet. That is life. I met his mother. And then she went away from me. He was left to me; and now he goes.

The Daughter. But he will come back.

The Blind Man. Who is speaking to me? I have heard that voice before—in my dreams; in my youth, when vacation began; in the early years of my marriage, when my

child was born. Every time life smiled at me, I heard that voice, like a whisper of the south wind, like a chord of harps from above, like what I feel the angels' greeting must be in the Holy Night—

[THE LAWYER enters and goes up to whisper something into THE BLIND MAN'S ear.]

The Blind Man. Is that so?

The Lawyer. That's the truth. *[Goes to THE DAUGHTER.]* Now you have seen most of it, but you have not yet tried the worst of it.

The Daughter. What can that be?

The Lawyer. Repetition—recurrence. To retrace one's own tracks; to be sent back to the task once finished—come!

The Daughter. Where?

The Lawyer. To your duties.

The Daughter. What does that mean?

The Lawyer. Everything you dread. Everything you do not want but must. It means to forego, to give up, to do without, to lack—it means everything that is unpleasant, repulsive, painful.

The Daughter. Are there no pleasant duties?

The Lawyer. They become pleasant when they are done.

The Daughter. When they have ceased to exist—Duty is then something unpleasant. What is pleasant then?

The Lawyer. What is pleasant is sin.

The Daughter. Sin?

The Lawyer. Yes, something that has to be punished. If I have had a pleasant day or night, then I suffer infernal pangs and a bad conscience the next day.

The Daughter. How strange!

The Lawyer. I wake up in the morning with a headache; and then the repetitions begin, but so that everything becomes perverted. What the night before was pretty, agreeable, witty, is presented by memory in the morning as ugly, distasteful, stupid. Pleasure seems to decay, and all joy goes to pieces. What men call success serves always as a basis for their next failure. My own successes have brought ruin upon me. For men view the fortune of others with an instinctive dread. They regard it unjust that fate should favor any one man, and so they try to restore balance by piling rocks on the road. To have talent is to be in danger of one's life, for then one may easily starve to death!—However, you will have to return to your duties, or I shall bring suit against you, and we shall pass through every court up to the highest—one, two, three!

The Daughter. Return?—To the iron

stove, and the cabbage pot, and the baby clothes——

The Lawyer. Exactly! We have a big wash today, for we must wash all the handkerchiefs——

The Daughter. Oh, must I do it all over again?

The Lawyer. All life is nothing but doing things over again. Look at the teacher in there—— He received his doctor's degree yesterday, was laureled and saluted, climbed Parnassus and was embraced by the monarch—and today he starts school all over again, asks how much twice two makes, and will continue to do so until his death—— However, you must come back to your home!

The Daughter. I would rather die!

The Lawyer. Die?—That is not allowed. First of all, it is a disgrace—so much so that even the dead body is subjected to insults; and secondly, one goes to hell—it is a mortal sin!

The Daughter. It is not easy to be human!

All. Hear!

The Daughter. I shall not go back with you to humiliation and dirt—— I am longing for the heights whence I came—but first the door must be opened so that I may learn the secret—— It is my will that the door be opened!

The Lawyer. Then you must retrace your own steps, cover the road you have already traveled, suffer all annoyances, repetitions, tautologies, recopyings, that a suit will bring with it——

The Daughter. May it come then—— But first I must go into the solitude and the wilderness to recover my own self. We shall meet again! [*To THE POET.*] Follow me.

[*Cries of anguish are heard from a distance: Woe! Woe! Woe!*]

The Daughter. What is that?

The Lawyer. The lost souls at Foulstrand.

The Daughter. Why do they wail more loudly than usual today?

The Lawyer. Because the sun is shining here; because here we have music, dancing, youth. And it makes them feel their own sufferings more keenly.

The Daughter. We must set them free.

The Lawyer. Try it! Once a liberator appeared, and he was nailed to a cross.

The Daughter. By whom?

The Lawyer. By all the right-minded.

The Daughter. Who are they?

The Lawyer. Are you not acquainted with all the right-minded? Then you must learn to know them.

The Daughter. Were they the ones that prevented your graduation?

The Lawyer. Yes.

The Daughter. Then I know them!

CURTAIN

On the shores of the Mediterranean. To the left, in the foreground, a white wall, and above it branches of an orange tree with ripe fruit on them. In the background, villas and a Casino placed on a terrace. To the right, a huge pile of coal and two wheelbarrows. In the background, to the right, a corner of blue sea.

[*TWO COALHEAVERS, naked to the waist, their faces, hands, and bodies blackened by coal dust, are seated on the wheelbarrows. Their expressions show intense despair.*]

[*THE DAUGHTER and THE LAWYER in the background.*]

The Daughter. This is paradise!

First Coalheaver. This is hell!

Second Coalheaver. One hundred and twenty degrees in the shadow.

First Heaver. Let's have a bath.

Second Heaver. The police won't let us. No bathing here.

First Heaver. Couldn't we pick some fruit off that tree?

Second Heaver. Then the police would get after us.

First Heaver. But I cannot do a thing in this heat—I'll just chuck the job——

Second Heaver. Then the police will get you for sure!— [*Pause.*] And you wouldn't have anything to eat anyhow.

First Heaver. Nothing to eat? We, who work hardest, get least food; and the rich, who do nothing, get most. Might one not—without disregard of truth—assert that this is injustice?—What has the daughter of the gods to say about it?

The Daughter. I can say nothing at all—— But tell me, what have you done that makes you so black and your lot so hard?

First Heaver. What have we done? We have been born of poor and perhaps not very good parents—— Maybe we have been punished a couple of times.

The Daughter. Punished?

First Heaver. Yes, the unpunished hang out in the Casino up there and dine on eight courses with wine.

The Daughter. [*To THE LAWYER.*] Can that be true?

The Lawyer. On the whole, yes.

The Daughter. You mean to say that

every man at some time has deserved to go to prison?

The Lawyer. Yes.

The Daughter. You, too?

The Lawyer. Yes.

The Daughter. Is it true that the poor cannot bathe in the sea?

The Lawyer. Yes. Not even with their clothes on. None but those who intend to take their own lives escape being fined. And those are said to get a good drubbing at the police station.

The Daughter. But can they not go outside of the city, out into the country, and bathe there?

The Lawyer. There is no place for them—all the land is fenced in.

The Daughter. But I mean in the free, open country.

The Lawyer. There is no such thing—it all belongs to somebody.

The Daughter. Even the sea, the great, vast sea—

The Lawyer. Even that! You cannot sail the sea in a boat and land anywhere without having it put down in writing and charged for. It is lovely!

The Daughter. This is not paradise.

The Lawyer. I should say not!

The Daughter. Why don't men do something to improve their lot?

The Lawyer. Oh, they try, of course, but all the improvers end in prison or in the madhouse—

The Daughter. Who puts them in prison?

The Lawyer. All the right-minded, all the respectable—

The Daughter. Who sends them to the madhouse?

The Lawyer. Their own despair when they grasp the hopelessness of their efforts.

The Daughter. Has the thought not occurred to anybody, that for secret reasons it must be as it is?

The Lawyer. Yes, those who are well off always think so.

The Daughter. That it is all right as it is?

First Heaver. And yet we are the foundations of society. If the coal is not unloaded, then there will be no fire in the kitchen stove, in the parlor grate, or in the factory furnace; then the light will go out in streets and shops and homes; then darkness and cold will descend upon you—and, therefore, we have to sweat as in hell so that the black coals may be had— And what do you do for us in return?

The Lawyer. [To THE DAUGHTER.] Help them!— [Pause.] That conditions cannot be

quite the same for everybody, I understand, but why should they differ so widely?

[A GENTLEMAN and A LADY pass across the stage.]

The Lady. Will you come and play a game with us?

The Gentleman. No, I must take a walk, so I can eat something for dinner.

First Heaver. So that he can eat something?

Second Heaver. So that he can—?

[CHILDREN enter and cry with horror when they catch sight of the grimy WORKERS.]

First Heaver. They cry when they see us. They cry—

Second Heaver. Damn it all!—I guess we'll have to pull out the scaffolds soon and begin to operate on this rotten body—

First Heaver. Damn it, I say, too!

[Spits.]

The Lawyer. [To THE DAUGHTER.] Yes, it is all wrong. And men are not so very bad—but—

The Daughter. But—?

The Lawyer. But the government—

The Daughter. [Goes out, hiding her face in her hands.] This is not paradise.

Coalheavers. No, hell, that's what it is!

CURTAIN

Fingal's Cave. Long green waves are rolling slowly into the cave. In the foreground, a siren buoy is swaying to and fro in time with the waves, but without sound—except at the indicated moment. Music of the winds. Music of the waves. [THE DAUGHTER and THE POET enter.]

The Poet. Where are you leading me?

The Daughter. Far away from the noise and lament of the man-children, to the utmost end of the ocean, to the cave that we name Indra's Ear because it is the place where the king of the heavens is said to listen to the complaints of the mortals.

The Poet. What? In this place?

The Daughter. Do you see how this cave is built like a shell? Yes, you can see it. Do you know that your ear, too, is built in the form of a shell? You know it, but have not thought of it. [She picks up a shell from the beach.] Have you not as a child held such a shell to your ear and listened—and heard the ripple of your heart-blood, the humming of your thoughts in the brain, the snapping of a thousand little worn-out

threads in the tissues of your body? All that you hear in this small shell. Imagine then what may be heard in this larger one!

The Poet. [*Listening.*] I hear nothing but the whispering of the wind.

The Daughter. Then I shall interpret it for you. Listen. The wail of the winds.

[*Recites to subdued music.*]

Born beneath the clouds of heaven,
Driven we were by the lightnings of Indra
Down to the sand-covered earth.
Straw from the harvested fields soiled our feet;

Dust from the high-roads,
Smoke from the cities,
Foul-smelling breaths,
Fumes from cellars and kitchens,
All we endured.

Then to the open sea we fled,
Filling our lungs with air,
Shaking our wings,
And laving our feet.

Indra, Lord of the Heavens,
Hear us!

Hear our sighing!
Unclean is the earth;
Evil is life;

Neither good nor bad
Can men be deemed.
As they can, they live,
One day at a time.

Sons of dust, through dust they journey;
Born out of dust, to dust they return.

Given they were, for trudging,
Feet, not wings for flying.

Dusty they grow—
Lies the fault then with them,
Or with Thee?

The Poet. Thus I heard it once—

The Daughter. Hush! The winds are still singing.

[*Recites to subdued music.*]

We, winds that wander,
We, the air's offspring,
Bear with us men's lament
Heard us you have
During gloom-filled Fall nights,
In chimneys and pipes,
In key-holes and door cracks,
When the rain wept on the roof:
Heard us you have
In the snowclad pine woods
Midst wintry gloom:
Heard us you have,
Crooning and moaning
In ropes and rigging
On the high-heaving sea.

It was we, the winds,
Offspring of the air,
Who learned how to grieve
Within human breasts
Through which we passed—
In sick-rooms, on battle-fields,
But mostly where the newborn
Whimpered and wailed
At the pain of living.

We, we the winds,
We are whining and whistling:
Woe! Woe! Woe!

The Poet. It seems to me that I have already—

The Daughter. Hush! Now the waves are singing. [*Recites to subdued music.*]

We, we waves,
That are rocking the winds
To rest—
Green cradles, we waves!
Wet are we, and salty;
Leap like flames of fire—
Wet flames are we:
Burning, extinguishing;
Cleansing, replenishing;
Bearing, engendering.

We, we waves,
That are rocking the winds
To rest!

The Daughter. False waves and faithless! Everything on earth that is not burned, is drowned—by the waves. Look at this. [*Pointing to pile of debris.*] See what the sea has taken and spoiled! Nothing but the figure-heads remain of the sunken ships—and the names: *Justice, Friendship, Golden Peace, Hope*—this is all that is left of *Hope*—of fickle *Hope*—railings, tholes, bails! And lo: the life buoy—which saved itself and let distressed men perish.

The Poet. [*Searching in the pile.*] Here is the name-board of the ship *Justice*. That was the one which left Fairhaven with the Blind Man's son on board. It is lost then! And with it are gone the lover of Alice, the hopeless love of Edith.

The Daughter. The blind man? Fairhaven? I must have been dreaming of them. And the lover of Alice, "Plain" Edith, Foul-strand and the Quarantine, sulphur and carbolic acid, the graduation in the church, the Lawyer's office, the passageway and Victoria, the Growing Castle and the Officer—All this I have been dreaming—

The Poet. It was in one of my poems.

The Daughter. You know then what poetry is——

The Poet. I know then what dreaming is—— But what is poetry?

The Daughter. Not reality, but more than reality—not dreaming, but daylight dreams——

The Poet. And the man-children think that we poets are only playing—that we invent and make believe.

The Daughter. And fortunate it is, my friend, for otherwise the world would lie fallow for lack of ministration. Everybody would be stretched on his back, staring into the sky. Nobody would be touching plough or spade, hammer or plane.

The Poet. And you say this, Indra's daughter, you who belong in part up there——

The Daughter. You do right in reproaching me. Too long have I stayed down here taking mud baths like you—— My thoughts have lost their power of flight; there is clay on their wings—mire on their feet—and I myself— [*Raising her arms.*] I sink, I sink— Help me, father, Lord of the Heavens! [*Silence.*] I can no longer hear his answer. The ether no longer carries the sound from his lips to my ear's shell—the silvery thread has snapped—— Woe is me, I am earth-bound!

The Poet. Do you mean to ascend—soon? *The Daughter.* As soon as I have consigned this mortal shape to the flames—for even the waters of the ocean cannot cleanse me. Why do you question me thus?

The Poet. Because I have a prayer——

The Daughter. What kind of prayer? *The Poet.* A written supplication from humanity to the ruler of the universe, formulated by a dreamer.

The Daughter. To be presented by whom? *The Poet.* By Indra's daughter.

The Daughter. Can you repeat what you have written?

The Poet. I can.

The Daughter. Speak it then.

The Poet. Better that you do it.

The Daughter. Where can I read it?

The Poet. In my mind—or here.

[*Hands her a roll of paper.*]

The Daughter. [*Receives the roll, but reads without looking at it.*] Well, by me it shall be spoken then:

"Why must you be born in anguish?

Why, O man-child, must you always

Wring your mother's heart with torture

When you bring her joy maternal,

Highest happiness yet known?

Why to life must you awaken,
Why to light give natal greeting,
With a cry of anger and of pain?
Why not meet it smiling, man-child,
When the gift of life is counted
In itself a boon unmatched?
Why like beasts should we be coming,
We of race divine and human?
Better garment craves the spirit,
Than one made of filth and blood!
Need a god his teeth be changing——"

—Silence, rash one! Is it seemly
For the work to blame its maker?
No one yet has solved life's riddle.
"Thus begins the human journey
O'er a road of thorns and thistles;
If a beaten path be offered,
It is named at once forbidden;
If a flower you covet, straightway
You are told it is another's;
If a field should bar your progress,
And you dare to break across it,
You destroy your neighbor's harvest;
Others then your own will trample,
That the measure may be evened!
Every moment of enjoyment
Brings to some one else a sorrow,
But your sorrow gladdens no one,
For from sorrow naught but sorrow springs.

"Thus you journey till you die,
And your death brings others' bread."

—Is it thus that you approach,
Son of Dust, the One Most High?

The Poet.

Could the son of dust discover
Words so pure and bright and simple
That to heaven they might ascend——?

Child of gods, wilt thou interpret
Mankind's grievance in some language
That immortals understand?

The Daughter. I will.

The Poet. [*Pointing to the buoy.*] What is that floating there?—A buoy?

The Daughter. Yes.

The Poet. It looks like a lung with a windpipe.

The Daughter. It is the watchman of the seas. When danger is abroad, it sings.

The Poet. It seems to me as if the sea were rising and the waves growing larger——

The Daughter. Not unlikely.

The Poet. Woe! What do I see? A ship bearing down upon the reef.

The Daughter. What ship can that be?

The Poet. The ghost ship of the seas, I think.

The Daughter. What ship is that?

The Poet. The *Flying Dutchman*.

The Daughter. Oh, that one. Why is he punished so hard, and why does he not seek harbor?

The Poet. Because he has seven faithless wives.

The Daughter. And for this he should be punished?

The Poet. Yes, all the right-minded condemned him—

The Daughter. Strange world, this!—How can he then be freed from his curse?

The Poet. Freed?—Oh, they take good care that none is set free.

The Daughter. Why?

The Poet. Because— No, it is not the *Dutchman*! It is an ordinary ship in distress. Why does not the buoy cry out now? Look, how the sea is rising—how high the waves are—soon we shall be unable to get out of the cave! Now the ship's bell is ringing—Soon we shall have another figurehead. Cry out, buoy! Do your duty, watchman! [*The buoy sounds a four-voice chord of fifths and sixths, reminding one of fog horns.*] The crew is signaling to us—but we are doomed ourselves.

The Daughter. Do you not wish to be set free?

The Poet. Yes, of course—of course, I wish it—but not just now, and not by water.

The Crew. [*Sings in quartet.*] Christ Kyrie!

The Poet. Now they are crying aloud, and so is the sea, but no one gives ear.

The Crew. [*As before.*] Christ Kyrie!

The Daughter. Who is coming there?

The Poet. Walking on the waters? There is only one who does that—and it is not Peter, the Rock, for he sank like a stone—

[*A white light is seen shining over the water at some distance.*]

The Crew. Christ Kyrie!

The Daughter. Can this be He?

The Poet. It is He, the crucified—

The Daughter. Why—tell me—why was He crucified?

The Poet. Because He wanted to set free—

The Daughter. Who was it—I have forgotten—that crucified Him?

The Poet. All the right-minded.

The Daughter. What a strange world!

The Poet. The sea is rising. Darkness is closing in upon us. The storm is growing—

[*The CREW set up a wild outcry.*]

The Poet. The crew scream with horror

at the sight of their Saviour—and now—they are leaping overboard for fear of the Redeemer—

[*The CREW utter another cry.*]

The Poet. Now they are crying because they must die. Crying when they are born, and crying when they pass away!

[*The rising waves threaten to engulf the Two in the cave.*]

The Daughter. If I could only be sure that it is a ship—

The Poet. Really—I don't think it is a ship— It is a two-storied house with trees in front of it—and a telephone tower—a tower that reaches up into the skies— It is the modern Tower of Babel sending wires to the upper regions—to communicate with those above—

The Daughter. Child, the human thought needs no wires to make a way for itself—the prayers of the pious penetrate the universe. It cannot be a Tower of Babel, for if you want to assail the heavens, you must do so with prayer.

The Poet. No, it is no house—no telephone tower—don't you see?

The Daughter. What are you seeing?

The Poet. I see an open space covered with snow—a drill ground— The winter sun is shining from behind a church on a hill, and the tower is casting its long shadow on the snow— Now a troop of soldiers come marching across the grounds. They march up along the tower, up the spire. Now they have reached the cross, but I have a feeling that the first one who steps on the gilded weathercock at the top must die. Now they are near it—a corporal is leading them—ha-ha! There comes a cloud sweeping across the open space, and right in front of the sun, of course—now everything is gone—the water in the cloud put out the sun's fire!—The light of the sun created the shadow picture of the tower, but the shadow picture of the cloud swallowed the shadow picture of the tower—

[*While THE POET is still speaking, the stage is changed and shows once more the passageway outside the opera-house.*]

The Daughter. [*To THE PORTRESS.*] Has the Lord Chancellor arrived yet?

The Portress. No.

The Daughter. And the Deans of the Faculties?

The Portress. No.

The Daughter. Call them at once, then, for the door is to be opened—

The Portress. Is it so very pressing?

The Daughter. Yes, it is. For there is a suspicion that the solution of the world—

riddle may be hidden behind it. Call the Lord Chancellor, and the Deans of the Four Faculties also.

[THE PORTRESS blows a whistle.]

The Daughter. And do not forget the Glazier and his diamond, for without them nothing can be done.

[STAGE PEOPLE enter from the left as in the earlier scene.]

The Officer. [Enters from the background, in Prince Albert and high hat, with a bunch of roses in his hand, looking radiantly happy.] Victoria!

The Portress. The young lady will be coming in a moment.

The Officer. Good! The carriage is waiting, the table is set, the wine is on ice—Permit me to embrace you, Madam! [Embraces THE PORTRESS.] Victoria!

A Woman's Voice from above. [Sings.] I am here!

The Officer. [Begins to walk to and fro.] Good! I am waiting.

The Poet. It seems to me that all this has happened before—

The Daughter. So it seems to me also.

The Poet. Perhaps I have dreamt it.

The Daughter. Or put it in a poem, perhaps.

The Poet. Or put it in a poem.

The Daughter. Then you know what poetry is.

The Poet. Then I know what dreaming is.

The Daughter. It seems to me that we have said all this to each other before, in some other place.

The Poet. Then you may soon figure out what reality is.

The Daughter. Or dreaming!

The Poet. Or poetry!

[Enter the LORD CHANCELLOR and the DEANS of the THEOLOGICAL, PHILOSOPHICAL, MEDICAL, and LEGAL FACULTIES.]

Lord Chancellor. It is about the opening of that door, of course—What does the Dean of the Theological Faculty think of it?

Dean of Theology. I do not think—I believe—*Credo*—

Dean of Philosophy. I hold—

Dean of Medicine. I know—

Dean of Jurisprudence. I doubt until I have evidence and witnesses.

Lord Chancellor. Now they are fighting again!—Well, what does Theology believe?

Theology. I believe that this door must not be opened, because it hides dangerous truths—

Philosophy. Truth is never dangerous.

Medicine. What is truth?

Jurisprudence. What can be proved by two witnesses.

Theology. Anything can be proved by two false witnesses—thinks the pettifogger.

Philosophy. Truth is wisdom; and wisdom, knowledge, is philosophy itself—Philosophy is the science of sciences, the knowledge of knowing, and all other sciences are its servants.

Medicine. Natural science is the only true science—and philosophy is no science at all. It is nothing but empty speculation.

Theology. Good!

Philosophy. [To THEOLOGY.] Good, you say! And what are you, then? You are the arch-enemy of all knowledge; you are the very antithesis of knowledge; you are ignorance and obscurantism—

Medicine. Good!

Theology. [To MEDICINE.] You cry “good,” you, who cannot see beyond the length of your own nose in the magnifying glass; who believe in nothing but your own unreliable senses—in your vision, for instance, which may be far-sighted, near-sighted, blind, purblind, cross-eyed, one-eyed, color-blind, red-blind, green-blind—

Medicine. Idiot!

Theology. Ass!

[They fight.]

Lord Chancellor. Peace! One crow does not peck out the other's eye.

Philosophy. If I had to choose between those two, Theology and Medicine, I should choose—neither!

Jurisprudence. And if I had to sit in judgment on all three of you, I should find—all guilty! You cannot agree on a single point, and you never could. Let us get back to the case in court. What is the opinion of the Lord Chancellor as to this door and its opening?

Lord Chancellor. Opinion? I have no opinion whatever. I am merely appointed by the government to see that you don't break each other's arms and legs in the Council—while you are educating the young! Opinion? Why, I take mighty good care to avoid everything of the kind. Once I had one or two, but they were refuted at once. Opinions are always refuted—by their opponents, of course—But perhaps we might open the door now, even with the risk of finding some dangerous truths behind it?

Jurisprudence. What is truth? What is truth?

Theology. I am the truth and the life—

Philosophy. I am the science of sciences—

Medicine. I am the only exact science—

Jurisprudence. I doubt— [They fight.]

The Daughter. Instructors of the young, take shame!

Jurisprudence. Lord Chancellor, as representative of the government, as head of the corps of instructors, you must prosecute this woman's offence. She has told all of you to take shame, which is an insult; and she has—in a sneering, ironical sense—called you instructors of the young, which is a slanderous speech.

The Daughter. Poor youth!

Jurisprudence. She pities the young, which is to accuse us. Lord Chancellor, you must prosecute the offence.

The Daughter. Yes, I accuse you—you in a body—of sowing doubt and discord in the minds of the young.

Jurisprudence. Listen to her—she herself is making the young question our authority, and then she charges us with sowing doubt. Is it not a criminal act, I ask all the right-minded?

All Right-Minded. Yes, it is criminal.

Jurisprudence. All the right-minded have condemned you. Leave in peace with your lucre, or else—

The Daughter. My lucre? Or else? What else?

Jurisprudence. Else you will be stoned.

The Poet. Or crucified.

The Daughter. I leave. Follow me, and you shall learn the riddle.

The Poet. Which riddle?

The Daughter. What did he mean by "my lucre?"

The Poet. Probably nothing at all. That kind of thing we call talk. He was just talking.

The Daughter. But it was what hurt me more than anything else!

The Poet. That is why he said it, I suppose— Men are that way.

All Right-Minded. Hooray! The door is open.

Lord Chancellor. What was behind the door?

The Glazier. I can see nothing.

Lord Chancellor. He cannot see anything—of course, he cannot! Deans of the Faculties: what was behind that door?

Theology. Nothing! That is the solution of the world-riddle. In the beginning God created heaven and earth out of nothing—

Philosophy. Out of nothing comes nothing.

Medicine. Yes, bosh—which is nothing!

Jurisprudence. I doubt. And this is a case of deception. I appeal to all the right-minded.

The Daughter. [To THE POET.] Who are the right-minded?

The Poet. Who can tell? Frequently all the right-minded consist of a single person. Today it is me and mine; tomorrow it is you and yours. To that position you are appointed—or rather, you appoint yourself to it.

All Right-Minded. We have been deceived.

Lord Chancellor. Who has deceived you?

All Right-Minded. The Daughter!

Lord Chancellor. Will the Daughter please tell us what she meant by having this door opened?

The Daughter. No, friends. If I did, you would not believe me.

Medicine. Why, then, there is nothing there.

The Daughter. You have said it—but you have not understood.

Medicine. It is bosh, what she says!

All. Bosh!

The Daughter. [To THE POET.] They are to be pitied.

The Poet. Are you in earnest?

The Daughter. Always in earnest.

The Poet. Do you think the right-minded are to be pitied also?

The Daughter. They most of all, perhaps.

The Poet. And the four faculties, too?

The Daughter. They also, and not the least. Four heads, four minds, and one body. Who made that monster?

All. She has not answered!

Lord Chancellor. Stone her then!

The Daughter. I have answered.

Lord Chancellor. Hear—she answers.

All. Stone her! She answers!

The Daughter. Whether she answer or do not answer, stone her! Come, prophet, and I shall tell you the riddle—but far away from here—out in the desert, where no one can hear us, no one see us, for—

The Lawyer. [Enters and takes THE DAUGHTER by the arm.] Have you forgotten your duties?

The Daughter. Oh, heavens, no! But I have higher duties.

The Lawyer. And your child?

The Daughter. My child—what of it?

The Lawyer. Your child is crying for you.

The Daughter. My child! Woe, I am earthbound! And this pain in my breast, this anguish—what is it?

The Lawyer. Don't you know?

The Daughter. No.

The Lawyer. It is remorse.

The Daughter. Is that remorse?

The Lawyer. Yes, and it follows every

neglected duty; every pleasure, even the most innocent, if innocent pleasures exist, which seems doubtful; and every suffering inflicted upon one's fellow beings.

The Daughter. And there is no remedy?

The Lawyer. Yes, but only one. It consists in doing your duty at once—

The Daughter. You look like a demon when you speak that word duty— And when, as in my case, there are two duties to be met?

The Lawyer. Meet one first, and then the other.

The Daughter. The highest first—therefore, you look after my child, and I shall do my duty—

The Lawyer. Your child suffers because it misses you—can you bear to know that a human being is suffering for your sake?

The Daughter. Now strife has entered my soul—it is rent in two, and the halves are being pulled in opposite directions!

The Lawyer. Such, you know, are life's little discords.

The Daughter. Oh, how it is pulling!

The Poet. If you could only know how I have spread sorrow and ruin around me by the exercise of my calling—and note that I say *calling*, which carries with it the highest duty of all—then you would not even touch my hand.

The Daughter. What do you mean?

The Poet. I had a father who put his whole hope on me as his only son, destined to continue his enterprise. I ran away from the business college. My father grieved himself to death. My mother wanted me to be religious, and I could not do what she wanted—and she disowned me. I had a friend who assisted me through trying days of need—and that friend acted as a tyrant against those on whose behalf I was speaking and writing. And I had to strike down my friend and benefactor in order to save my soul. Since then I have had no peace. Men call me devoid of honor, infamous—and it does not help that my conscience says, "You have done right," for in the next moment it is saying, "You have done wrong." Such is life.

The Daughter. Come with me into the desert.

The Lawyer. Your child!

The Daughter. [*Indicating all those present.*] Here are my children. By themselves they are good, but if they only come together, then they quarrel and turn into demons—Farewell!

[*Outside the castle. The same scenery as in the first scene of the first act. But*

now the ground in front of the castle wall is covered with flowers—blue monk's-hood or aconite. On the roof of the castle, at the very top of its lantern, there is a chrysanthemum bud ready to open. The castle windows are illuminated with candles.]

[*THE DAUGHTER and THE POET enter.*]

The Daughter. The hour is not distant when, with the help of the flames, I shall once more ascend to the ether. It is what you call to die, and what you approach in fear.

The Poet. Fear of the unknown.

The Daughter. Which is known to you.

The Poet. Who knows it?

The Daughter. All! Why do you not believe your prophets.

The Poet. Prophets have always been disbelieved. Why is that so? And "if God has spoken, why will men not believe then?" His convincing power ought to be irresistible.

The Daughter. Have you always doubted?

The Poet. No. I have had certainty many times. But after a while it passed away, like a dream when you wake up.

The Daughter. It is not easy to be human!

The Poet. You see and admit it?

The Daughter. I do.

The Poet. Listen! Was it not Indra that once sent his son down here to receive the complaints of mankind?

The Daughter. Thus it happened—and how was he received?

The Poet. How did he fill his mission?—to answer with another question.

The Daughter. And if I may reply with still another—was not man's position bettered by his visit to the earth? Answer truly!

The Poet. Bettered?—Yes, a little. A very little— But instead of asking questions—will you not tell the riddle?

The Daughter. Yes. But to what use? You will not believe me.

The Poet. In you I shall believe, for I know who you are.

The Daughter. Then I shall tell! In the morning of the ages, before the sun was shining, Brahma, the divine primal force, let himself be persuaded by Maya, the world-mother, to propagate himself. This meeting of the divine primal matter with the earth-matter was the fall of heaven into sin. Thus the world, existence, mankind, are nothing but a phantom, an appearance, a dream-image—

The Poet. My dream!

The Daughter. A dream of truth! But in

order to free themselves from the earth-matter, the offspring of Brahma seek privation and suffering. There you have suffering as a liberator. But this craving for suffering comes into conflict with the craving for enjoyment, or love—do you now understand what love is, with its utmost joys merged into its utmost sufferings, with its mixture of what is most sweet and most bitter? Can you now grasp what woman is? Woman, through whom sin and death found their way into life?

The Poet. I understand!—And the end?

The Daughter. You know it: conflict between the pain of enjoyment and the pleasure of suffering—between the pangs of the penitent and the joys of the prodigal—

The Poet. A conflict it is then?

The Daughter. Conflict between opposites produces energy, as fire and water give the power of steam—

The Poet. But peace? Rest?

The Daughter. Hush! You must ask no more, and I can no longer answer. The altar is already adorned for the sacrifice—the flowers are standing guard—the candles are lit—there are white sheets in the windows—spruce boughs have been spread in the gateway—

The Poet. And you say this as calmly as if for you suffering did not exist!

The Daughter. You think so? I have suffered all your sufferings, but in a hundred-fold degree, for my sensations were so much more acute—

The Poet. Relate your sorrow!

The Daughter. Poet, could you tell yours so that not one word went too far? Could your word at any time approach your thought?

The Poet. No, you are right! To myself I appeared like one struck dumb, and when the mass listened admiringly to my song, I found it mere noise— For this reason, you see, I have always felt ashamed when they praised me.

The Daughter. And then you ask me—Look me straight in the eye!

The Poet. I cannot bear your glance—

The Daughter. How could you bear my word then, were I to speak in your tongue?

The Poet. But tell me at least before you go: from what did you suffer most of all down here?

The Daughter. From—being: to feel my vision weakened by an eye, my hearing blunted by an ear, and my thought, my bright and buoyant thought, bound in labyrinthine coils of fat. You have seen a brain—what roundabout and sneaking paths—

The Poet. Well, that is because all the right-minded think crookedly!

The Daughter. Malicious, always malicious, all of you!

The Poet. How could one possibly be otherwise?

The Daughter. First of all I now shake the dust from my feet—the dirt and the clay—

[Takes off her shoes and puts them into the fire.]

The Portress. [Puts her shawl into the fire.] Perhaps I may burn my shawl at the same time?

[Goes out.]

The Officer. [Enters.] And I my roses, of which only the thorns are left. [Goes out.]

The Billposter. [Enters.] My bills may go, but never the dipnet! [Goes out.]

The Glazier. [Enters.] The diamond that opened the door—good-bye! [Goes out.]

The Lawyer. [Enters.] The minutes of the great process concerning the pope's beard or the water loss in the sources of the Ganges. [Goes out.]

Master of Quarantine. [Enters.] A small contribution in shape of the black mask that made me a blackamoor against my will!

[Goes out.]

Victoria. [Enters.] My beauty, my sorrow! [Goes out.]

Edith. [Enters.] My plainness, my sorrow! [Goes out.]

The Blind Man. [Enters; puts his hand into the fire.] I give my hand for my eye. [Goes out.]

[DON JUAN in his wheel-chair; SHE and THE FRIEND.]

Don Juan. Hurry up! Hurry up! Life is short! [Leaves with the OTHER TWO.]

The Poet. I have read that when the end of life draws near, everything and everybody rushes by in continuous review— Is this the end?

The Daughter. Yes, it is my end. Farewell!

The Poet. Give us a parting word.

The Daughter. No, I cannot. Do you believe that your words can express our thoughts?

Dean of Theology. [Enters in a rage.] I am cast off by God and persecuted by man; I am deserted by the government and scorned by my colleagues! How am I to believe when nobody else believes? How am I to defend a god that does not defend his own? Bosh, that's what it is!

[Throws a book on the fire and goes out.]

The Poet. [Snatches the book out of the fire.] Do you know what it is? A martyr-

ology, a calendar with a martyr for each day of the year.

The Daughter. Martyr?

The Poet. Yes, one that has been tortured and killed on account of his faith! Tell me, why?—Do you think that all who are tortured suffer, and that all who are killed feel pain? Suffering is said to be salvation, and death a liberation.

Christine. [*With slips of paper.*] I paste, I paste until there is nothing more to paste—

The Poet. And if heaven should split in twain, you would try to paste it together—Away!

Christine. Are there no double windows in this castle?

The Poet. Not one, I tell you.

Christine. Well, then I'll go. [*Goes out.*]

The Daughter.

The parting hour has come, the end draws near.

And now farewell, thou dreaming child of man,

Thou singer, who alone know'st how to live!
When from thy winged flight above the earth
At times thou sleepest downward to the dust,

It is to touch it only, not to stay!

And as I go—how, in the parting hour,
As one must leave for e'er a friend, a place,
The heart with longing swells for what one loves,

And with regret for all wherein one failed!

O, now the pangs of life in all their force
I feel: I know at last the lot of man—
Regretfully one views what once was scorned;

For sins one never sinned remorse is felt;
To stay one craves, but equally to leave:

As if to horses tied that pull apart,
One's heart is split in twain, one's feelings rent,

By indecision, contrast, and discord.

Farewell! To all thy fellow-men make known
That where I go I shall forget them not;
And in thy name their grievance shall be placed

Before the throne. Farewell!

[*She goes into the castle. Music is heard. The background is lit up by the burning castle and reveals a wall of human faces, questioning, grieving, despairing. As the castle breaks into flames, the bud on the roof opens into a gigantic chrysanthemum flower.*]

CURTAIN

MAN AND SUPERMAN*

A Comedy and a Philosophy

By

BERNARD SHAW

[Since Shaw has furnished *Man and Superman* with so brilliant a preface in the "Epistle Dedicatory," the editors have limited themselves to annotation of his highly

allusive text. Moreover, Shaw forbade introductions and annotations to his work during his lifetime; though we annotate, we still obey him in not introducing.]

EPISTLE DEDICATORY

TO ARTHUR BINGHAM WALKLEY¹

MY DEAR WALKLEY

You once asked me why I did not write a Don Juan play. The levity with which you assumed this frightful responsibility has probably by this time enabled you to forget it; but the day of reckoning has arrived: here is your play! I say your play, because *qui facit per alium facit per se*.² Its profits, like its labor, belong to me: its morals, its manners, its philosophy, its influence on the young, are for you to justify. You were of mature age when you made the suggestion; and you knew your man. It is hardly fifteen years since, as twin pioneers of the New Journalism of that time, we two, cradled in the same new sheets, began an epoch in the criticism of the theatre and the opera house by making it the pretext for a propaganda of our own views of life. So you cannot plead ignorance of the character of the force you set in motion. You meant me to *épater le bourgeois*;³ and if he protests, I hereby refer him to you as the accountable party.

I warn you that if you attempt to repudiate your responsibility, I shall suspect you of finding the play too decorous for your taste. The fifteen years have made me

older and graver. In you I can detect no such becoming change. Your levities and audacities are like the loves and comforts prayed for by Desdemona: they increase, even as your days do grow. No mere pioneering journal dares meddle with them now: the stately *Times* itself is alone sufficiently above suspicion to act as your chaperone; and even *The Times* must sometimes thank its stars that new plays are not produced every day, since after each such event its gravity is comprised, its platitude turned to epigram, its portentousness to wit, its propriety to elegance, and even its decorum into naughtiness by criticisms which the traditions of the paper do not allow you to sign at the end, but which you take care to sign with the most extravagant flourishes between the lines. I am not sure that this is not a portent of Revolution. In eighteenth century France the end was at hand when men bought the *Encyclopedia* and found Diderot there. When I buy *The Times* and find you there, my prophetic ear catches a rattle of twentieth century tumbrils.

However, that is not my present anxiety. The question is, will you not be disappointed with a Don Juan play in which not one of that hero's *mille e tre*¹ adventures is brought upon the stage? To propitiate you, let me explain myself. You will retort that I never do anything else: it is your favorite jibe at me that what I call drama is nothing but explanation. But you must not expect me to adopt your inexplicable, fantastic, petulant,

* Used by arrangement with Dodd, Mead and Company, Inc.

¹ In 1903 dramatic critic of the London *Times*. Walkley always insisted that Shaw's comedies were not plays. He was noted for applying the principles stated in Aristotle's *Poetics* to modern plays. He is the original of Trotter in *Fanny's First Play*.

² "Whoever creates through another creates through himself." Shaw adapts a sentence from a decree of Pope Boniface VIII.

³ "Shock the ordinary citizen."

¹ Leporello, in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, asserts that the Don has had "one thousand and three" love affairs in Spain alone.

fastidious ways: you must take me as I am, a reasonable, patient, consistent, apologetic, laborious person, with the temperament of a school master and the pursuits of a vestryman. No doubt that literary knack of mine which happens to amuse the British public distracts attention from my character; but the character is there none the less, solid as bricks. I have a conscience; and conscience is always anxiously explanatory. You, on the contrary, feel that a man who discusses his conscience is much like a woman who discusses her modesty. The only moral force you condescend to parade is the force of your wit: the only demand you make in public is the demand of your artistic temperament for symmetry, elegance, style, grace, refinement, and the cleanliness which comes next to godliness if not before it. But my conscience is the genuine pulpit article: it annoys me to see people comfortable when they ought to be uncomfortable; and I insist on making them think in order to bring them to conviction of sin. If you don't like my preaching you must lump it. I really cannot help it.

In the preface to my *Plays for Puritans* I explained the predicament of our contemporary English drama, forced to deal almost exclusively with cases of sexual attraction, and yet forbidden to exhibit the incidents of that attraction or even to discuss its nature. Your suggestion that I should write a Don Juan play was virtually a challenge to me to treat this subject myself dramatically. The challenge was difficult enough to be worth accepting, because, when you come to think of it, though we have plenty of dramas with heroes and heroines who are in love and must accordingly marry or perish at the end of the play, or about people whose relations with one another have been complicated by the marriage laws, not to mention the looser sort of plays which trade on the tradition that illicit love affairs are at once vicious and delightful, we have no modern English plays in which the natural attraction of the sexes for one another is made the mainspring of the action. That is why we insist on beauty in our performers, differing herein from the countries our friend William Archer¹ holds up as examples of seriousness to our childish theatres. There the Juliets and Isoldes, the Romeos and Tristans, might be our mothers and fathers. Not so the English actress. The heroine she impersonates is not allowed to discuss the elemental relations of men and women: all

her romantic twaddle about novelet-made love, all her purely legal dilemmas as to whether she was married or "betrayed," quite miss our hearts and worry our minds. To console ourselves we must just look at her. We do so; and her beauty feeds our starving emotions. Sometimes we grumble ungallantly at the lady because she does not act as well as she looks. But in a drama which, with all its preoccupation with sex, is really void of sexual interest, good looks are more desired than histrionic skill.

Let me press this point on you, since you are too clever to raise the fool's cry of paradox whenever I take hold of a stick by the right end instead of the wrong end. Why are our occasional attempts to deal with the sex problem on the stage so repulsive and dreary that even those who are most determined that sex questions shall be held open and their discussion kept free, cannot pretend to relish these joyless attempts at social sanitation? Is it not because at bottom they are utterly sexless? What is the usual formula for such plays? A woman has, on some past occasion, been brought into conflict with the law which regulates the relations of the sexes. A man, by falling in love with her, or marrying her, is brought into conflict with the social convention which discountenances the woman. Now the conflicts of individuals with law and convention can be dramatized like all other human conflicts; but they are purely judicial; and the fact that we are much more curious about the suppressed relations between the man and the woman than about the relations between both and our courts of law and private juries of matrons, produces that sensation of evasion, of dissatisfaction, of fundamental irrelevance, of shallowness, of useless disagreeableness, of total failure to edify and partial failure to interest, which is as familiar to you in the theatres as it was to me when I, too, frequented those uncomfortable buildings, and found our popular playwrights in the mind to (as they thought) emulate Ibsen.

I take it that when you asked me for a Don Juan play you did not want that sort of thing. Nobody does: the successes such plays sometimes obtain are due to the incidental conventional melodrama with which the experienced popular author instinctively saves himself from failure. But what did you want? Owing to your unfortunate habit—you now, I hope, feel its inconvenience—of not explaining yourself, I have had to discover this for myself. First, then, I have had to ask myself, what is a Don Juan?

¹ Dramatic critic and translator of Ibsen. He admired the French and Scandinavian theatres.

Vulgarly, a libertine. But your dislike of vulgarity is pushed to the length of a defect (universality of character is impossible without a share of vulgarity); and even if you could acquire the taste, you would find yourself overfed from ordinary sources without troubling me. So I took it that you demanded a Don Juan in the philosophic sense.

Philosophically, Don Juan is a man who, though gifted enough to be exceptionally capable of distinguishing between good and evil, follows his own instincts without regard to the common, statute, or canon law; and therefore, whilst gaining the ardent sympathy of our rebellious instincts (which are flattered by the brilliancies with which Don Juan associates them) finds himself in mortal conflict with existing institutions, and defends himself by fraud and force as unscrupulously as a farmer defends his crops by the same means against vermin. The prototypic Don Juan, invented early in the seventeenth century by a Spanish monk,¹ was presented, according to the ideas of that time, as the enemy of God, the approach of whose vengeance is felt throughout the drama, growing in menace from minute to minute. No anxiety is caused on Don Juan's account by any minor antagonist: he easily eludes the police, temporal and spiritual; and when an indignant father seeks private redress with the sword, Don Juan kills him without an effort. Not until the slain father returns from heaven as the agent of God, in the form of his own statue, does he prevail against his slayer and cast him into hell. The moral is a monkish one: repent and reform now; for tomorrow it may be too late. This is really the only point on which Don Juan is sceptical; for he is a devout believer in an ultimate hell, and risks damnation only because, as he is young, it seems so far off that repentance can be postponed until he has amused himself to his heart's content.

But the lesson intended by an author is hardly ever the lesson the world chooses to learn from his book. What attracts and impresses us in *El Burlador de Sevilla* is not the immediate urgency of repentance, but the heroism of daring to be the enemy of God. From Prometheus to my own Devil's Disciple, such enemies have always been popular. Don Juan became such a pet that the world could not bear his damnation. It reconciled him sentimentally to God in a second version, and clamored for his canonization for a whole century, thus treating

him as English journalism has treated that comic foe of the gods, Punch. Molière's Don Juan casts back to the original in point of impenitence; but in piety he falls off greatly. True, he also proposes to repent; but in what terms! "Oui, ma foi! il faut s'amender. Encore vingt ou trente ans de cette vie-ci, et puis nous songerons à nous."¹ After Molière comes the artist-enchanter, the master beloved by masters, Mozart, revealing the hero's spirit in magical harmonies, elfin tones, and elate darting rhythms as of summer lightning made audible. Here you have freedom in love and in morality mocking exquisitely at slavery to them, and interesting you, attracting you, tempting you, inexplicably forcing you to range the hero with his enemy the statue on a transcendent plane, leaving the prudish daughter and her priggish lover on a crockery shelf below to live piously ever after.

After these completed works Byron's fragment² does not count for much philosophically. Our vagabond libertines are no more interesting from that point of view than the sailor who has a wife in every port; and Byron's hero is, after all, only a vagabond libertine. And he is dumb: he does not discuss himself with a Sganarelle-Leporello³ or with the fathers or brothers of his mistresses: he does not even, like Casanova,⁴ tell his own story. In fact he is not a true Don Juan at all; for he is no more an enemy of God than any romantic and adventurous young sower of wild oats. Had you and I been in his place at his age, who knows whether we might not have done as he did, unless indeed your fastidiousness had saved you from the empress Catherine.⁵ Byron was as little of a philosopher as Peter the Great: both were instances of that rare and useful, but unedifying variation, an energetic genius born without the prejudices or superstitions of his contemporaries. The resultant unscrupulous freedom of thought made Byron a bolder poet than Wordsworth just as it made Peter a bolder king than George III; but as it was, after all, only a negative qualification, it did not prevent Peter from being an appalling blackguard and an arrant poltroon, nor did it enable Byron to become a

¹ "Yes, indeed I must reform. Give me twenty or thirty more years of life like this and then I will think about it."

² *Don Juan*, sixteen cantos and some stanzas of the 17th.

³ Sganarelle is Don Juan's servant in Molière's *Don Juan*; Leporello in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.

⁴ Giovanni Jacopo Casanova de Seingalt, author of *Mémoires* (1826), notorious for their recital of amours.

⁵ Byron's canto 9 tells of his Juan's affair with Catherine the Great.

¹ Tirso de Molina (1571-1648), author of *El Burlador de Sevilla*.

religious force like Shelley. Let us, then, leave Byron's Don Juan out of account. Mozart's is the last of the true Don Juans; for by the time he was of age, his cousin Faust had, in the hands of Goethe, taken his place and carried both his warfare and his reconciliation with the gods far beyond mere love-making into politics, high art, schemes for reclaiming new continents from the ocean, and recognition of an eternal womanly principle in the universe. Goethe's Faust and Mozart's Don Juan were the last words of the XVIII century on the subject; and by the time the polite critics of the XIX century, ignoring William Blake as superficially as the XVIII had ignored Hogarth or the XVII Bunyan, had got past the Dickens-Macaulay Dumas-Guizot stage and the Stendhal-Meredith-Turgeneff stage, and were confronted with philosophic fiction by such pens as Ibsen's and Tolstoy's, Don Juan had changed his sex and become Doña Juana, breaking out of the Doll's House and asserting herself as an individual instead of a mere item in a moral pageant.

Now it is all very well for you at the beginning of the XX century to ask me for a Don Juan play; but you will see from the foregoing survey that Don Juan is a full century out of date for you and for me; and if there are millions of less literate people who are still in the eighteenth century, have they not Molière and Mozart, upon whose art no human hand can improve? You would laugh at me if at this time of day I dealt in duels and ghosts and "womanly" women. As to mere libertinism, you would be the first to remind me that the *Festin de Pierre*¹ of Molière is not a play for amorists, and that one bar of the voluptuous sentimentality of Gounod or Bizet would appear as a licentious stain on the score of *Don Giovanni*. Even the more abstract parts of the Don Juan play are dilapidated past use: for instance, Don Juan's supernatural antagonist hurled those who refuse to repent into lakes of burning brimstone, there to be tormented by devils with horns and tails. Of that antagonist, and of that conception of repentance, how much is left that could be used in a play by me dedicated to you? On the other hand, those forces of middle class public opinion which hardly existed for a Spanish nobleman in the days of the first Don Juan, are now triumphant everywhere. Civilized society is one huge bourgeoisie: no nobleman dares now shock his greengrocer. The women, "mar-

chesane, principesse, cameriere, cittadine"¹ and all, are become equally dangerous: the sex is aggressive, powerful: when women are wronged they do not group themselves pathetically to sing "Protegga il giusto cielo":² they grasp formidable legal and social weapons, and retaliate. Political parties are wrecked and public careers undone by a single indiscretion. A man had better have all the statues in London to supper with him, ugly as they are, than be brought to the bar of the Nonconformist Conscience by Donna Elvira.³ Excommunication has become almost as serious a business as it was in the tenth century.

As a result, Man is no longer, like Don Juan, victor in the duel of sex. Whether he has ever really been may be doubted: at all events the enormous superiority of Woman's natural position in this matter is telling with greater and greater force. As to pulling the Nonconformist Conscience by the beard as Don Juan plucked the beard of the Commandant's statue in the convent of San Francisco, that is out of the question nowadays: prudence and good manners alike forbid it to a hero with any mind. Besides, it is Don Juan's own beard that is in danger of plucking. Far from relapsing into hypocrisy, as Sganarelle feared, he has unexpectedly discovered a moral in his immorality. The growing recognition of his new point of view is heaping responsibility on him. His former jests he has had to take as seriously as I have had to take some of the jests of Mr W. S. Gilbert.⁴ His scepticism, once his least tolerated quality, has now triumphed so completely that he can no longer assert himself by witty negations, and must, to save himself from cipherdom, find an affirmative position. His thousand and three affairs of gallantry, after becoming, at most, two immature intrigues leading to sordid and prolonged complications and humiliations, have been discarded altogether as unworthy of his philosophic dignity and compromising to his newly acknowledged position as the founder of a school. Instead of pretending to read Ovid he does actually read Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, studies Westermarck,⁵ and is con-

¹ "Marquises, princesses, chambermaids, citizens' wives"—so Leporello in *Don Giovanni* lists the Don's victims.

² "May just Heaven protect . . ." from a trio sung in scene 4, Act I, of *Don Giovanni*.

³ Old love deserted by Don Giovanni.

⁴ Collaborator with Sir Arthur Sullivan in the famous operettas. Shaw is thinking of the line of succession in comedy.

⁵ Books representing this change might be: Ovid's *Ars Amoris*, Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea*, Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*, Westermarck's *History of Human Marriage*.

¹ Alternative title of *Don Juan*.

cerned for the future of the race instead of for the freedom of his own instincts. Thus his profligacy and his dare-devil airs have gone the way of his sword and mandoline into the rag shop of anachronisms and superstitions. In fact, he is now more Hamlet than Don Juan; for though the lines put into the actor's mouth to indicate to the pit that Hamlet is a philosopher are for the most part mere harmonious platitude which, with a little debasement of the word-music, would be proper to Pecksniff,¹ yet if you separate the real hero, inarticulate and unintelligible to himself except in flashes of inspiration, from the performer who has to talk at any cost through five acts; and if you also do what you must always do in Shakespear's tragedies: that is, dissect out the absurd sensational incidents and physical violences of the borrowed story from the genuine Shakespearian tissue, you will get a true Promethean foe of the gods, whose instinctive attitude towards women much resembles that to which Don Juan is now driven. From this point of view Hamlet was a developed Don Juan whom Shakespear palmed off as a reputable man just as he palmed poor Macbeth off as a murderer. Today the palming off is no longer necessary (at least on your plane and mine) because Don Juanism is no longer misunderstood as mere Casanovism. Don Juan himself is almost ascetic in his desire to avoid that misunderstanding; and so my attempt to bring him up to date by launching him as a modern Englishman into a modern English environment has produced a figure superficially quite unlike the hero of Mozart.

And yet I have not the heart to disappoint you wholly of another glimpse of the Mozartian *dissoluto punito*² and his antagonist the statue. I feel sure you would like to know more of that statue—to draw him out when he is off duty, so to speak. To gratify you, I have resorted to the trick of the strolling theatrical manager who advertizes the pantomime of Sinbad the Sailor with a stock of second-hand picture posters designed for Ali Baba. He simply thrusts a few oil jars into the valley of diamonds, and so fulfils the promise held out by the hoardings to the public eye. I have adapted this easy device to our occasion by thrusting into my perfectly modern three-act play a totally extraneous act in which my hero, enchanted by the air of the Sierra, has a dream in which his Mozartian ancestor appears and philosophizes at great length in a Shavio-Socratic dialogue

with the lady, the statue, and the devil.

But this pleasantry is not the essence of the play. Over this essence I have no control. You propound a certain social substance, sexual attraction to wit, for dramatic distillation; and I distil it for you. I do not adulterate the product with aphrodisiacs nor dilute it with romance and water; for I am merely executing your commission, not producing a popular play for the market. You must therefore (unless, like most wise men, you read the play first and the preface afterwards) prepare yourself to face a trumpery story of modern London life, a life in which, as you know, the ordinary man's main business is to get means to keep up the position and habits of a gentleman, and the ordinary woman's business is to get married. In 9,999 cases out of 10,000, you can count on their doing nothing, whether noble or base, that conflicts with these ends; and that assurance is what you rely on as their religion, their morality, their principles, their patriotism, their reputation, their honor and so forth.

On the whole, this is a sensible and satisfactory foundation for society. Money means nourishment and marriage means children; and that men should put nourishment first and women children first is, broadly speaking, the law of Nature and not the dictate of personal ambition. The secret of the prosaic man's success, such as it is, is the simplicity with which he pursues these ends: the secret of the artistic man's failure, such as that is, is the versatility with which he strays in all directions after secondary ideals. The artist is either a poet or a scallawag: as poet, he cannot see, as the prosaic man does, that chivalry is at bottom only romantic suicide: as scallawag, he cannot see that it does not pay to sponge and beg and lie and brag and neglect his person. Therefore do not misunderstand my plain statement of the fundamental constitution of London society as an Irishman's reproach to your nation. From the day I first set foot on this foreign soil I knew the value of the prosaic qualities of which Irishmen teach Englishmen to be ashamed as well as I knew the vanity of the poetic qualities of which Englishmen teach Irishmen to be proud. For the Irishman instinctively disparages the quality which makes the Englishman dangerous to him; and the Englishman instinctively flatters the fault that makes the Irishman harmless and amusing to him. What is wrong with the prosaic Englishman is what is wrong with the prosaic men of all countries: stupidity. The vitality which places nourishment and children first, heaven and hell a somewhat

¹ Hypocritical moralizer in Dickens' *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

² "Punished libertine."

remote second, and the health of society as an organic whole nowhere, may muddle successfully through the comparatively tribal stages of gregariousness; but in nineteenth century nations and twentieth century commonwealths the resolve of every man to be rich at all costs, and of every woman to be married at all costs, must, without a highly scientific social organization, produce a ruinous development of poverty, celibacy, prostitution, infant mortality, adult degeneracy, and everything that wise men most dread. In short, there is no future for men, however brimming with crude vitality, who are neither intelligent nor politically educated enough to be Socialists. So do not misunderstand me in the other direction either: if I appreciate the vital qualities of the Englishman as I appreciate the vital qualities of the bee, I do not guarantee the Englishman against being, like the bee (or the Canaanite) smoked out and unloaded of his honey by beings inferior to himself in simple acquisitiveness, combativeness, and fecundity, but superior to him in imagination and cunning.

The Don Juan play, however, is to deal with sexual attraction, and not with nutrition, and to deal with it in a society in which the serious business of sex is left by men to women, as the serious business of nutrition is left by women to men. That the men, to protect themselves against a too aggressive prosecution of the women's business, have set up a feeble romantic convention that the initiative in sex business must always come from the man, is true; but the pretence is so shallow that even in the theatre, that last sanctuary of unreality, it imposes only on the inexperienced. In Shakespeare's plays the woman always takes the initiative. In his problem plays and his popular plays alike the love interest is the interest of seeing the woman hunt the man down. She may do it by charming him, like Rosalind, or by stratagem, like Mariana; but in every case the relation between the woman and the man is the same: she is the pursuer and contriver, he the pursued and disposed of. When she is baffled, like Ophelia, she goes mad and commits suicide; and the man goes straight from her funeral to a fencing match. No doubt Nature, with very young creatures, may save the woman the trouble of scheming; Prospero knows that he has only to throw Ferdinand and Miranda together and they will mate like a pair of doves; and there is no need for Perdita to capture Florizel as the lady doctor in *All's Well That Ends Well* (an early Ibsenite heroine) captures Bertram. But the mature cases all illustrate the Shake-

spearian law. The one apparent exception, Petruchio, is not a real one: he is most carefully characterized as a purely commercial matrimonial adventurer. Once he is assured that Katharine has money, he undertakes to marry her before he has seen her. In real life we find not only Petruchios, but Mantalins¹ and Dobbins² who pursue women with appeals to their pity or jealousy or vanity, or cling to them in a romantically infatuated way. Such effeminate do not count in the world scheme: even Bunsby dropping like a fascinated bird into the jaws of Mrs Mac-Stinger³ is by comparison a true tragic object of pity and terror. I find in my own plays that Woman, projecting herself dramatically by my hands (a process over which I assure you I have no more real control than I have over my wife), behaves just as Woman did in the plays of Shakespear.

And so your Don Juan has come to birth as a stage projection of the tragi-comic love chase of the man by the woman; and my Don Juan is the quarry instead of the huntsman. Yet he is a true Don Juan, with a sense of reality that disables convention, defying to the last the fate which finally overtakes him. The woman's need of him to enable her to carry on Nature's most urgent work does not prevail against him until his resistance gathers her energy to a climax at which she dares to throw away her customary exploitations of the conventional affectionate and dutiful poses, and claim him by natural right for a purpose that far transcends their mortal personal purposes.

Among the friends to whom I have read this play in manuscript are some of our own sex who are shocked at the "unscrupulousness," meaning the utter disregard of masculine fastidiousness, with which the woman pursues her purpose. It does not occur to them that if women were as fastidious as men, morally or physically, there would be an end of the race. Is there anything meaner than to throw necessary work upon other people and then disparage it as unworthy and indelicate? We laugh at the haughty American nation because it makes the negro clean its boots and then proves the moral and physical inferiority of the negro by the fact that he is a shoeblack; but we ourselves throw the whole drudgery of creation on one sex, and then imply that no female of any womanliness or delicacy would initiate any effort in that direction. There are no limits to male hypocrisy in this matter. No doubt

¹ In Dickens' *Nicholas Nickleby*.

² In Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*.

³ In Dickens' *Dombey and Son*.

there are moments when man's sexual immunities are made acutely humiliating to him. When the terrible moment of birth arrives, its supreme importance and its superhuman effort and peril, in which the father has no part, dwarf him into the meanest insignificance: he slinks out of the way of the humblest petticoat, happy if he be poor enough to be pushed out of the house to out-face his ignominy by drunken rejoicings. But when the crisis is over he takes his revenge, swaggering as the breadwinner, and speaking of Woman's "sphere" with condescension, even with chivalry, as if the kitchen and the nursery were less important than the office in the city. When his swagger is exhausted he drifts into erotic poetry or sentimental uxoriousness; and the Tennysonian King Arthur posing at Guinevere¹ becomes Don Quixote grovelling before Dulcinea.² You must admit that here Nature beats Comedy out of the field: the wildest hominist or feminist farce is insipid after the most commonplace "slice of life." The pretence that women do not take the initiative is part of the farce. Why, the whole world is strewn with snares, traps, gins, and pitfalls for the capture of men by women. Give women the vote, and in five years there will be a crushing tax on bachelors. Men, on the other hand, attach penalties to marriage, depriving women of property, of the franchise, of the free use of their limbs, of that ancient symbol of immortality, the right to make oneself at home in the house of God by taking off the hat, of everything that he can force Woman to dispense with without compelling himself to dispense with her. All in vain. Woman must marry because the race must perish without her travail: if the risk of death and the certainty of pain, danger, and unutterable discomforts cannot deter her, slavery and swaddled ankles will not. And yet we assume that the force that carries women through all these perils and hardships stops abashed before the primnesses of our behavior for young ladies. It is assumed that the woman must wait, motionless, until she is wooed. Nay, she often does wait motionless. That is how the spider waits for the fly. But the spider spins her web. And if the fly, like my hero, shews a strength that promises to extricate him, how swiftly does she abandon her pretence of passiveness, and openly fling coil after coil about him until he is secured for ever!

If the really impressive books and other art-works of the world were produced by

ordinary men, they would express more fear of women's pursuit than love of their illusory beauty. But ordinary men cannot produce really impressive art-works. Those who can are men of genius: that is, men selected by Nature to carry on the work of building up an intellectual consciousness of her own instinctive purpose. Accordingly, we observe in the man of genius all the unscrupulousness and all the "self-sacrifice" (the two things are the same) of Woman. He will risk the stake and the cross; starve, when necessary, in a garret all his life; study women and live on their work and care as Darwin studied worms and lived upon sheep; work his nerves into rags without payment, a sublime altruist in his disregard of himself, an atrocious egotist in his disregard of others. Here Woman meets a purpose as impersonal, as irresistible as her own; and the clash is sometimes tragic. When it is complicated by the genius being a woman, then the game is one for a king of critics: your George Sand becomes a mother to gain experience for the novelist and to develop her, and gobbles up men of genius, Chopins, Mussets and the like, as mere hors d'œuvres.

I state the extreme case, of course; but what is true of the great man who incarnates the philosophic consciousness of Life and the woman who incarnates its fecundity, is true in some degree of all geniuses and all women. Hence it is that the world's books get written, its pictures painted, its statues modelled, its symphonies composed, by people who are free from the otherwise universal dominion of the tyranny of sex. Which leads us to the conclusion, astonishing to the vulgar, that art, instead of being before all things the expression of the normal sexual situation, is really the only department in which sex is a superseded and secondary power, with its consciousness so confused and its purpose so perverted, that its ideas are mere fantasy to common men. Whether the artist becomes poet or philosopher, moralist or founder of a religion, his sexual doctrine is nothing but a barren special pleading for pleasure, excitement, and knowledge when he is young, and for contemplative tranquility when he is old and satiated. Romance and Asceticism, Amorism and Puritanism are equally unreal in the great Philistine world. The world shewn us in books, whether the books be confessed epics or professed gospels, or in codes, or in political orations, or in philosophic systems, is not the main world at all: it is only the self-consciousness of certain abnormal people who have the specific artistic talent and temperament. A serious

¹ See *Guinevere* in *Idylls of the King*.

² See chapter 10 of Part II of *Don Quixote*.

matter this for you and me, because the man whose consciousness does not correspond to that of the majority is a madman; and the old habit of worshipping madmen is giving way to the new habit of locking them up. And since what we call education and culture is for the most part nothing but the substitution of reading for experience, of literature for life, of the obsolete fictitious for the contemporary real, education, as you no doubt observed at Oxford, destroys, by supplantation, every mind that is not strong enough to see through the imposture and to use the great Masters of Arts as what they really are and no more: that is, patentees of highly questionable methods of thinking, and manufacturers of highly questionable, and for the majority but half valid, representations of life. The schoolboy who uses his Homer to throw at his fellow's head makes perhaps the safest and most rational use of him; and I observe with reassurance that you occasionally do the same, in your prime, with your Aristotle.

Fortunately for us, whose minds have been so overwhelmingly sophisticated by literature, what produces all these treatises and poems and scriptures of one sort or another is the struggle of Life to become divinely conscious of itself instead of blindly stumbling hither and thither in the line of least resistance. Hence there is a driving towards truth in all books on matters where the writer, though exceptionally gifted, is normally constituted, and has no private axe to grind. Copernicus had no motive for misleading his fellowmen as to the place of the sun in the solar system: he looked for it as honestly as a shepherd seeks his path in a mist. But Copernicus would not have written love stories scientifically. When it comes to sex relations, the man of genius does not share the common man's danger of capture, nor the woman of genius the common woman's overwhelming specialization. And that is why our scriptures and other art works, when they deal with love, turn from honest attempts at science in physics to romantic nonsense, erotic ecstasy, or the stern asceticism of satiety ("the road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom" said William Blake; for "you never know what is enough unless you know what is more than enough").

There is a political aspect of this sex question which is too big for my comedy, and too momentous to be passed over without culpable frivolity. It is impossible to demonstrate that the initiative in sex transactions remains with Woman, and has been confirmed to her, so far, more and more by

the suppression of rapine and discouragement of importunity, without being driven to very serious reflections on the fact that this initiative is politically the most important of all the initiatives, because our political experiment of democracy, the last refuge of cheap misgovernment, will ruin us if our citizens are ill bred.

When we two were born,¹ this country was still dominated by a selected class bred by political marriages. The commercial class had not then completed the first twenty-five years of its new share of political power; and it was itself selected by money qualification, and bred, if not by political marriage, at least by a pretty rigorous class marriage. Aristocracy and plutocracy still furnish the figureheads of politics; but they are now dependent on the votes of the promiscuously bred masses. And this, if you please, at the very moment when the political problem, having suddenly ceased to mean a very limited and occasional interference, mostly by way of jobbing public appointments, in the mismanagement of a tight but parochial little island, with occasional meaningless prosecution of dynastic wars, has become the industrial reorganization of Britain, the construction of a practically international Commonwealth, and the partition of the whole of Africa and perhaps the whole of Asia by the civilized Powers. Can you believe that the people whose conceptions of society and conduct, whose power of attention and scope of interest, are measured by the British theatre as you know it today, can either handle this colossal task themselves, or understand and support the sort of mind and character that is (at least comparatively) capable of handling it? For remember: what our voters are in the pit and gallery they are also in the polling booth. We are all now under what Burke called "the hoofs of the swinish multitude." Burke's language gave great offence because the implied exceptions to its universal application made it a class insult; and it certainly was not for the pot to call the kettle black. The aristocracy he defended, in spite of the political marriages by which it tried to secure breeding for itself, had its mind undertrained by silly school-masters and governesses, its character corrupted by gratuitous luxury, its self-respect adulterated to complete spuriousness by flattery and flunkeyism. It is no better today and never will be any better: our very peasants have something morally harderier in them that culminates occasionally in a Bunyan, a Burns,

¹ Walkley was born in 1855; Shaw in 1856.

or a Carlyle. But observe, this aristocracy, which was overpowered from 1832 to 1885 by the middle class, has come back to power by the votes of "the swinish multitude." Tom Paine has triumphed over Edmund Burke; and the swine are now courted electors. How many of their own class have these electors sent to parliament? Hardly a dozen out of 670, and these only under the persuasion of conspicuous personal qualifications and popular eloquence. The multitude thus pronounces judgment on its own units: it admits itself unfit to govern, and will vote only for a man morphologically and generically transfigured by palatial residence and equipage, by transcendent tailoring, by the glamor of aristocratic kinship. Well, we two know these transfigured persons, these college passmen, these well groomed monocular Algys and Bobbies, these cricketers to whom age brings golf instead of wisdom, these plutocratic products of "the nail and sarspan business as he got his money by." Do you know whether to laugh or cry at the notion that they, poor devils! will drive a team of continents as they drive a four-in-hand; turn a jostling anarchy of casual trade and speculation into an ordered productivity; and federate our colonies into a world-Power of the first magnitude? Give these people the most perfect political constitution and the soundest political program that benevolent omniscience can devise for them, and they will interpret it into mere fashionable folly or canting charity as infallibly as a savage converts the philosophical theology of a Scotch missionary into crude African idolatry.

I do not know whether you have any illusions left on the subject of education, progress, and so forth. I have none. Any pamphleteer can shew the way to better things; but when there is no will there is no way. My nurse was fond of remarking that you cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear; and the more I see of the efforts of our churches and universities and literary sages to raise the mass above its own level, the more convinced I am that my nurse was right. Progress can do nothing but make the most of us all as we are, and that most would clearly not be enough even if those who are already raised out of the lowest abysses would allow the others a chance. The bubble of Heredity has been pricked: the certainty that acquirements are negligible as elements in practical heredity has demolished the hopes of the educationists as well as the terrors of the degeneracy mongers; and we know now that there is no hereditary

"governing class" any more than a hereditary hooliganism. We must either breed political capacity or be ruined by Democracy, which was forced on us by the failure of the older alternatives. Yet if Despotism failed only for want of a capable benevolent despot, what chance has Democracy, which requires a whole population of capable voters: that is, of political critics who, if they cannot govern in person for lack of spare energy or specific talent for administration, can at least recognize and appreciate capacity and benevolence in others, and so govern through capably benevolent representatives? Where are such voters to be found today? Nowhere. Plutocratic inbreeding has produced a weakness of character that is too timid to face the full stringency of a thoroughly competitive struggle for existence and too lazy and petty to organize the commonwealth co-operatively. Being cowards, we defeat natural selection under cover of philanthropy: being sluggards, we neglect artificial selection under cover of delicacy and morality.

Yet we must get an electorate of capable critics or collapse as Rome and Egypt collapsed. At this moment the Roman decadent phase of *panem et circenses*¹ is being inaugurated under our eyes. Our newspapers and melodramas are blustering about our imperial destiny; but our eyes and hearts turn eagerly to the American millionaire. As his hand goes down to his pocket, our fingers go up to the brims of our hats by instinct. Our ideal prosperity is not the prosperity of the industrial north, but the prosperity of the Isle of Wight, of Folkestone and Ramsgate, of Nice and Monte Carlo.² That is the only prosperity you see on the stage, where the workers are all footmen, parlormaid, comic lodging-letters, and fashionable professional men, whilst the heroes and heroines are miraculously provided with unlimited dividends and eat gratuitously, like the knights in Don Quixote's books of chivalry. The city papers prate of the competition of Bombay with Manchester and the like. The real competition is the competition of Regent Street with the Rue de Rivoli, of Brighton and the south coast with the Riviera, for the spending money of the American Trusts. What is all this growing love of pageantry, this effusive loyalty, this officious rising and uncovering at a wave from a flag or a blast from a brass band? Imperialism? Not a bit of it. Obsequiousness, servility, cupidity roused by the prevailing smell of

¹ "Bread and circuses."

² British and European seaside resorts.

money. When Mr Carnegie rattled his millions in his pockets all England became one rapacious cringe. Only, when Rhodes (who had probably been reading my *Socialism for Millionaires*) left word that no idler was to inherit his estate, the bent backs straightened mistrustfully for a moment. Could it be that the Diamond King was no gentleman after all? However, it was easy to ignore a rich man's solecism. The ungentlemanly clause was not mentioned again; and the backs soon bowed themselves back into their natural shape.

But I hear you asking me in alarm whether I have actually put all this tub thumping into a Don Juan comedy. I have not. I have only made my Don Juan a political pamphleteer, and given you his pamphlet in full by way of appendix. You will find it at the end of the book. I am sorry to say that it is a common practice with romancers to announce their hero as a man of extraordinary genius, and then leave his works entirely to the reader's imagination; so that at the end of the book you whisper to yourself ruefully that but for the author's solemn preliminary assurance you should hardly have given the gentleman credit for ordinary good sense. You cannot accuse me of this pitiable barrenness, this feeble evasion. I not only tell you that my hero wrote a revolutionists' handbook: I give you the handbook at full length for your edification if you care to read it. And in that handbook you will find the politics of the sex question as I conceive Don Juan's descendant to understand them. Not that I disclaim the fullest responsibility for his opinions and for those of all my characters, pleasant and unpleasant. They are all right from their several points of view; and their points of view are, for the dramatic moment, mine also. This may puzzle the people who believe that there is such a thing as an absolutely right point of view, usually their own. It may seem to them that nobody who doubts this can be in a state of grace. However that may be, it is certainly true that nobody who agrees with them can possibly be a dramatist, or indeed anything else that turns upon a knowledge of mankind. Hence it has been pointed out that Shakespear had no conscience. Neither have I, in that sense.

You may, however, remind me that this digression of mine into politics was preceded by a very convincing demonstration that the artist never catches the point of view of the common man on the question of sex, because he is not in the same predicament. I first prove that anything I write on the relation of the sexes is sure to be misleading; and

then I proceed to write a Don Juan play. Well, if you insist on asking me why I behave in this absurd way, I can only reply that you asked me to, and that in any case my treatment of the subject may be valid for the artist, amusing to the amateur, and at least intelligible and therefore possibly suggestive to the Philistine. Every man who records his illusions is providing data for the genuinely scientific psychology which the world still waits for. I plank down my view of the existing relations of men to women in the most highly civilized society for what it is worth. It is a view like any other view and no more, neither true nor false, but, I hope, a way of looking at the subject which throws into the familiar order of cause and effect a sufficient body of fact and experience to be interesting to you, if not to the play-going public of London. I have certainly shewn little consideration for that public in this enterprise; but I know that it has the friendliest disposition towards you and me as far as it has any consciousness of our existence, and quite understands that what I write for you must pass at a considerable height over its simple romantic head. It will take my books as read and my genius for granted, trusting me to put forth work of such quality as shall bear out its verdict. So we may disport ourselves on our own plane to the top of our bent; and if any gentleman points out that neither this epistle dedicatory nor the dream of Don Juan in the third act of the ensuing comedy is suitable for immediate production at a popular theatre we need not contradict him. Napoleon provided Talma¹ with a pit of kings, with what effect on Talma's acting is not recorded. As for me, what I have always wanted is a pit of philosophers; and this is a play for such a pit.

I should make formal acknowledgment to the authors whom I have pillaged in the following pages if I could recollect them all. The theft of the brigand-poetaster from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is deliberate;² and the metamorphosis of Leporello into Enry Straker, motor engineer and New Man, is an intentional dramatic sketch of the contemporary embryo of Mr H. G. Wells's anticipation of the efficient engineering class which will, he hopes, finally sweep the jabberers out of the way of civilization. Mr Barrie has also, whilst I am correcting my proofs, delighted London with a servant who knows

¹ French actor, 1763-1826.

² In "How the Brigadier Held the King," a story in Conan Doyle's *Exploits of Brigadier Gevord* (1895), a brigand called El Cuchillo writes poetry, but no samples of it appear.

more than his masters.¹ The conception of Mendoza Limited I trace back to a certain West Indian colonial secretary,² who, at a period when he and I and Mr Sidney Webb were sowing our political wild oats as a sort of Fabian Three Musketeers, without any prevision of the surprising respectability of the crop that followed, recommended Webb, the encyclopedic and inexhaustible, to form himself into a company for the benefit of the shareholders. Octavius I take over unaltered from Mozart; and I hereby authorize any actor who impersonates him, to sing "Dalla sua pace"³ (if he can) at any convenient moment during the representation. Ann was suggested to me by the fifteenth-century Dutch morality called *Everyman*, which Mr William Poel has lately resuscitated so triumphantly. I trust he will work that vein further, and recognize that Elizabethan Renaissance fustian is no more bearable after medieval poesy than Scribe after Ibsen. As I sat watching *Everyman* at the Charterhouse,⁴ I said to myself Why not Everywoman? Ann was the result: every woman is not Ann; but Ann is Everywoman.

That the author of *Everyman* was no mere artist, but an artist-philosopher, and that the artist-philosophers are the only sort of artists I take quite seriously, will be no news to you. Even Plato and Boswell, as the dramatists who invented Socrates and Dr Johnson, impress me more deeply than the romantic playwrights. Ever since, as a boy, I first breathed the air of transcendental regions at a performance of Mozart's *Zauberflöte*,⁵ I have been proof against the garish splendors and alcoholic excitements of the ordinary stage combinations of Tappertit⁶ romance with the police intelligence. Bunyan, Blake, Hogarth, and Turner (these four apart and above all the English classics), Goethe, Shelley, Schopenhauer, Wagner, Ibsen, Morris, Tolstoy, and Nietzsche are among the writers whose peculiar sense of the world I recognize as more or less akin to my own. Mark the word peculiar. I read Dickens and Shakespear without shame or stint; but their pregnant observations and demonstrations of life are not co-ordinated into any philosophy or religion: on the contrary, Dickens's sentimental assumptions are violently contradicted by his observa-

tions; and Shakespear's pessimism is only his wounded humanity. Both have the specific genius of the fictionist and the common sympathies of human feeling and thought in pre-eminent degree. They are often saner and shrewder than the philosophers just as Sancho Panza was often saner and shrewder than Don Quixote. They clear away vast masses of oppressive gravity by their sense of the ridiculous, which is at bottom a combination of sound moral judgment with light-hearted good humor. But they are concerned with the diversities of the world instead of with its unities: they are so irreligious that they exploit popular religion for professional purposes without delicacy or scruple (for example, Sydney Carton¹ and the ghost in Hamlet!); they are anarchical, and cannot balance their exposures of Angelo and Dogberry, Sir Leicester Dedlock² and Mr Tite Barnacle,³ with any portrait of a prophet or a worthy leader: they have no constructive ideas: they regard those who have them as dangerous fanatics: in all their fictions there is no leading thought or inspiration for which any man could conceivably risk the spoiling of his hat in a shower, much less his life. Both are alike forced to borrow motives for the more strenuous actions of their personages from the common stockpot of melodramatic plots; so that Hamlet has to be stimulated by the prejudices of a policeman and Macbeth by the cupidities of a bush-ranger. Dickens, without the excuse of having to manufacture motives for Hamlets and Macbeths, superfluously punts his crew down the stream of his monthly parts by mechanical devices which I leave you to describe, my own memory being quite baffled by the simplest question as to Monks in *Oliver Twist*, or the long lost parentage of Smike,⁴ or the relations between the Dorrit and Clennam families so inopportunistically discovered by Monsieur Rigaud Blandois.⁵ The truth is, the world was to Shakespear a great "stage of fools" on which he was utterly bewildered. He could see no sort of sense in living at all; and Dickens saved himself from the despair of the dream in *The Chimes* by taking the world for granted and busying himself with its details. Neither of them could do anything with a serious positive character: they could place a human figure before you with perfect verisimilitude; but when the moment came for making it live and move, they found, unless it made them

¹ *The Admirable Crichton*.

² Sydney Olivier, later Lord Olivier.

³ Don Ottavio's aria in Act I of *Don Giovanni*: "My peace depends on hers."

⁴ Poel's revival was played in the courtyard of the medieval almshouse, Charterhouse, in 1901.

⁵ *The Magic Flute*.

⁶ Tappertit is an apprentice in Dickens' *Barnaby Rudge*.

¹ In *A Tale of Two Cities*.

² In *Bleak House*.

³ In *Little Dorrit*.

⁴ In *Nicholas Nickleby*.

⁵ In *Little Dorrit*.

laugh, that they had a puppet on their hands, and had to invent some artificial external stimulus to make it work. This is what is the matter with Hamlet all through: he has no will except in his bursts of temper. Foolish Bardolaters make a virtue of this after their fashion: they declare that the play is the tragedy of irresolution; but all Shakespear's projections of the deepest humanity he knew have the same defect: their characters and manners are lifelike; but their actions are forced on them from without, and the external force is grotesquely inappropriate except when it is quite conventional, as in the case of Henry V. Falstaff is more vivid than any of these serious reflective characters, because he is self-acting: his motives are his own appetites and instincts and humors. Richard III, too, is delightful as the whimsical comedian who stops a funeral to make love to the corpse's son's widow; but when, in the next act, he is replaced by a stage villain who smothers babies and offs with people's heads, we are revolted at the imposture and repudiate the changeling. Faulconbridge, Coriolanus, Leontes are admirable descriptions of instinctive temperaments: indeed the play of Coriolanus is the greatest of Shakespear's comedies; but description is not philosophy; and comedy neither compromises the author nor reveals him. He must be judged by those characters into which he puts what he knows of himself, his Hamlets and Macbeths and Lears and Prosperos. If these characters are agonizing in a void about factitious melodramatic murders and revenges and the like, whilst the comic characters walk with their feet on solid ground, vivid and amusing, you know that the author has much to shew and nothing to teach. The comparison between Falstaff and Prospero is like the comparison between Micawber and David Copperfield. At the end of the book you know Micawber, whereas you only know what has happened to David, and are not interested enough in him to wonder what his politics or religion might be if anything so stupendous as a religious or political idea, or a general idea of any sort, were to occur to him. He is tolerable as a child; but he never becomes a man, and might be left out of his own biography altogether but for his usefulness as a stage confidant, a Horatio or "Charles his friend": what they call on the stage a feeder.

Now you cannot say this of the works of the artist-philosophers. You cannot say it, for instance, of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Put your Shakespearian hero and coward, Henry V and Pistol or Parolles, beside Mr Valiant

and Mr Fearing, and you have a sudden revelation of the abyss that lies between the fashionable author who could see nothing in the world but personal aims and the tragedy of their disappointment or the comedy of their incongruity, and the field preacher who achieved virtue and courage by identifying himself with the purpose of the world as he understood it. The contrast is enormous: Bunyan's coward stirs your blood more than Shakespear's hero, who actually leaves you cold and secretly hostile. You suddenly see that Shakespear, with all his flashes and divinations, never understood virtue and courage, never conceived how any man who was not a fool could, like Bunyan's hero, look back from the brink of the river of death over the strife and labor of his pilgrimage, and say "yet do I not repent me"; or, with the panache of a millionaire, bequeath "my sword to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage, and my courage and skill to him that can get it." This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy. And also the only real tragedy in life is the being used by personally minded men for purposes which you recognize to be base. All the rest is at worst mere misfortune or mortality: this alone is misery, slavery, hell on earth; and the revolt against it is the only force that offers a man's work to the poor artist, whom our personally minded rich people would so willingly employ as pandar, buffoon, beauty monger, sentimentalizer and the like.

It may seem a long step from Bunyan to Nietzsche; but the difference between their conclusion is merely formal. Bunyan's perception that righteousness is filthy rags, his scorn for Mr Legality in the village of Morality, his defiance of the Church as the supplanter of religion, his insistence on courage as the virtue of virtues, his estimate of the career of the conventionally respectable and sensible Worldly Wiseman as no better at bottom than the life and death of Mr Badman: all this, expressed by Bunyan in the terms of a tinker's theology, is what Nietzsche has expressed in terms of post-Darwin, post-Schopenhauer philosophy; Wagner in terms of polytheistic mythology; and Ibsen in terms of mid-XIX century Parisian dramaturgy. Nothing is new in these matters except their novelties: for instance, it is a

novelty to call Justification by Faith "Wille," and Justification by Works "Vorstellung." The sole use of the novelty is that you and I buy and read Schopenhauer's treatise on Will and Representation when we should not dream of buying a set of sermons on Faith versus Works. At bottom the controversy is the same, and the dramatic results are the same. Bunyan makes no attempt to present his pilgrims as more sensible or better conducted than Mr Worldly Wiseman. Mr W. W.'s worst enemies, Mr Embezzler, Mr Never-go-to-Church-on-Sunday, Mr Bad Form, Mr Murderer, Mr Burglar, Mr Correspondent, Mr Blackmailer, Mr Cad, Mr Drunkard, Mr Labor Agitator and so forth, can read *The Pilgrim's Progress* without finding a word said against them; whereas the respectable people who snub them and put them in prison, such as Mr W. W. himself and his young friend Civility; Formalist and Hypocrisy; Wildhead, Inconsiderate, and Pragmatick (who were clearly young university men of good family and high feeding); that brisk lad Ignorance, Talkative, By-ends of Fairspeech and his mother-in-law Lady Feigning, and other reputable gentlemen and citizens, catch it very severely. Even Little Faith, though he gets to heaven at last, is given to understand that it served him right to be mobbed by the brothers Faint Heart, Mistrust, and Guilt, all three recognized members of respectable society and veritable pillars of the law. The whole allegory is a consistent attack on morality and respectability, without a word that one can remember against vice and crime. Exactly what is complained of in Nietzsche and Ibsen, is it not? And also exactly what would be complained of in all the literature which is great enough and old enough to have attained canonical rank, officially or unofficially, were it not that books are admitted to the canon by a compact which confesses their greatness in consideration of abrogating their meaning; so that the reverend rector can agree with the prophet Micah as to his inspired style without being committed to any complicity in Micah's furiously Radical opinions. Why, even I, as I force myself, pen in hand, into recognition and civility, find all the force of my onslaught destroyed by a simple policy of nonresistance. In vain do I redouble the violence of the language in which I proclaim my heterodoxies. I rail at the theistic credulity of Voltaire, the amoristic superstition of Shelley, the revival of tribal soothsaying and idolatrous rites which Huxley called Science and mistook for an advance on the Pentateuch, no less than at the welter

of ecclesiastical and professional humbug which saves the face of the stupid system of violence and robbery which we call Law and Industry. Even atheists reproach me with infidelity and anarchists with nihilism because I cannot endure their moral tirades. And yet, instead of exclaiming "Send this inconceivable Satanist to the stake," the respectable newspapers pith me by announcing "another book by this brilliant and thoughtful writer." And the ordinary citizen, knowing that an author who is well spoken of by a respectable newspaper must be all right, reads me, as he reads Micah, with undisturbed edification from his own point of view. It is narrated that in the eighteenth century an old lady, a very devout Methodist, moved from Colchester to a house in the neighborhood of the City Road, in London, where, mistaking the Hall of Science for a chapel, she sat at the feet of Charles Bradlaugh for many years, entranced by his eloquence, without questioning his orthodoxy or moulting a feather of her faith. I fear I shall be defrauded of my just martyrdom in the same way.

However, I am digressing, as a man with a grievance always does. And, after all, the main thing in determining the artistic quality of a book is not the opinions it propagates, but the fact that the writer has opinions. The old lady from Colchester was right to sun her simple soul in the energetic radiance of Bradlaugh's genuine beliefs and disbeliefs rather than in the chill of such mere painting of light and heat as elocution and convention can achieve. My contempt for *belles lettres*, and for amateurs who become the heroes of the fanciers of literary virtuosity, is not founded on any illusion of mine as to the permanence of those forms of thought (call them opinions) by which I strive to communicate my bent to my fellows. To younger men they are already outmoded; for though they have no more lost their logic than an eighteenth-century pastel has lost its drawing or its color, yet, like the pastel, they grow indefinitely shabby, and will grow shabbier until they cease to count at all, when my books will either perish, or, if the world is still poor enough to want them, will have to stand, with Bunyan's, by quite amorphous qualities of temper and energy. With this conviction I cannot be a bellettrist. No doubt I must recognize, even as the Ancient Mariner did, that I must tell my story entertainingly if I am to hold the wedding guest spellbound in spite of the siren sounds of the loud bassoon. But "for art's sake" alone I would not face the toil of writing a single

sentence. I know that there are men who, having nothing to say and nothing to write, are nevertheless so in love with oratory and with literature that they delight in repeating as much as they can understand of what others have said or written aforetime. I know that the leisurely tricks which their want of conviction leaves them free to play with the diluted and misapprehended message supply them with a pleasant parlor game which they call style. I can pity their dotage and even sympathize with their fancy. But a true original style is never achieved for its own sake: a man may pay from a shilling to a guinea, according to his means, to see, hear, or read another man's act of genius; but he will not pay with his whole life and soul to become a mere virtuoso in literature, exhibiting an accomplishment which will not even make money for him, like fiddle playing. Effectiveness of assertion is the Alpha and Omega of style. He who has nothing to assert has no style and can have none: he who has something to assert will go as far in power of style as its momentousness and his conviction will carry him. Disprove his assertion after it is made, yet its style remains. Darwin has no more destroyed the style of Job nor of Handel than Martin Luther destroyed the style of Giotto. All the assertions get disproved sooner or later; and so we find the world full of a magnificent débris of artistic fossils, with the matter-of-fact credibility gone clean out of them, but the form still splendid. And that is why the old masters play the deuce with our mere susceptibles. Your Royal Academician thinks he can get the style of Giotto without Giotto's beliefs, and correct his perspective into the bargain. Your man of letters thinks he can get Bunyan's or Shakespear's style without Bunyan's conviction or Shakespear's apprehension, especially if he takes care not to split his infinitives. And so with your Doctors of Music, who, with their collections of discords duly prepared and resolved or retarded or anticipated in the manner of the great composers, think they can learn the art of Palestrina from Cherubini's treatise.¹ All this academic art is far worse than the trade in sham antique furniture; for the man who sells me an oaken chest which he swears was made in the XIII century, though as a matter of fact he made it himself only yesterday, at least does not pretend that there are any modern ideas in it; whereas your academic copier of fossils offers them to you as the latest outpouring of the human

spirit, and, worst of all, kidnaps young people as pupils and persuades them that his limitations are rules, his observances dexterities, his timidities good taste, and his emptiness purities. And when he declares that art should not be didactic, all the people who have nothing to teach and all the people who don't want to learn agree with him emphatically.

I pride myself on not being one of these susceptibles. If you study the electric light with which I supply you in that Bumble-donian public capacity¹ of mine over which you make merry from time to time, you will find that your house contains a great quantity of highly susceptible copper wire which gorges itself with electricity and gives you no light whatever. But here and there occurs a scrap of intensely insusceptible, intensely resistant material; and that stubborn scrap grapples with the current and will not let it through until it has made itself useful to you as those two vital qualities of literature, light and heat. Now if I am to be no mere copper wire amateur but a luminous author, I must also be a most intensely refractory person, liable to go out and to go wrong at inconvenient moments, and with incendiary possibilities. These are the faults of my qualities; and I assure you that I sometimes dislike myself so much that when some irritable reviewer chances at that moment to pitch into me with zest, I feel unspeakably relieved and obliged. But I never dream of reforming, knowing that I must take myself as I am and get what work I can out of myself. All this you will understand; for there is community of material between us: we are both critics of life as well as of art; and you have perhaps said to yourself when I have passed your windows "There, but for the grace of God, go I." An awful and chastening reflection, which shall be the closing cadence of this immoderately long letter from yours faithfully,

G. BERNARD SHAW.

WOKING, 1903

P.S.—Amid unprecedented critical cerebation over this book of ours—alas! that your own voice should be dedicated to silence!—I find myself warned to prepare a new edition. I take the opportunity to correct a slip or two. You may have noticed (nobody else has, by the way) that I fitted you with a quotation from *Othello*, and then unconsciously referred it to *A Winter's Tale*. I

¹ *Treatise on Counterpoint and Fugue*.

¹ In 1903 Shaw was a Borough Councilor for St. Pancras, London. Bumble is a domineering beadle in Dickens' *Oliver Twist*.

correct this with regret; for half its appropriateness goes with Florizel and Perdita: still, one must not trifle with Shakespear; so I have given Desdemona back her property.¹

On the whole, the book has done very well. The strong critics are impressed; the weak intimidated; the connoisseurs tickled by my literary bravura (put in to please you): the humorists alone, oddly enough, sermonize me, scared out of their profession into the quaintest tumults of conscience. Not all my reviewers have understood me: like Englishmen in France, confidently uttering their own island diphthongs as good French vowels, many of them offer, as samples of the Shavian philosophy, the likeliest article from their own stock. Others are the victims of

association of ideas: they call me Pessimist because my remarks wound their self-complacency, and Renegade because I would have my mob all Cæsars instead of Toms, Dicks, and Harrys. Worst of all, I have been accused of preaching a Final Ethical Superman: no other, in fact, than our old friend the Just Man made Perfect! This misunderstanding is so galling that I lay down my pen without another word lest I should be tempted to make the postscript longer even than the letter.

POSTSCRIPT 1933. The evolutionary theme of the third act of *Man and Superman* was resumed by me twenty years later in the preface to *Back to Methuselah*, where it developed as the basis of the religion of the near future.

¹ This refers to the fourth sentence of the second paragraph of the *Epistle Dedicatory*.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

Born 1856, Dublin, Ireland.

1871-1876, Clerk and cashier in Dublin Land Agency.

1876, Moved to London. For nine years earned almost nothing, but read widely and practiced writing and public speaking.

1879-1883, Wrote five novels, but none published till 1884.

1884, Joined the Fabian Society and immediately became a leader in it.

1885, Began to have regular employment as a literary, music, and art critic for various London journals, and became self-supporting again.

1891, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* published.

1892, First play, *Widowers' Houses*, produced by The Independent Theatre.

1894, *Arms and the Man*, a commercial failure in London, but a small success in New York.

1895-1898, Dramatic critic for *The Saturday Review*. These criticisms collected in *Our Theatres in the Nineties*, 1932.

1897, *The Devil's Disciple*, produced in New York, his first dramatic financial success, enabled him to quit journalism.

1898, Married Charlotte Payne-Townshend.

1904-1907, The Barker-Vedrenne repertory management at the Court Theatre established Shaw's reputation in London as it had been earlier established in New York.

1925, Awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Died 1950. His will provided that the residue of his large estate should be used to propagandize for the

reform of the English Alphabet, but the courts held this to be contrary to the public interest and the funds were divided among the British Museum, The National Gallery of Ireland, and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.¹

PLAYS

(Date of completion precedes title; date of production is in italics; date of publication follows in roman.) 1892 *Widowers' Houses*, 1892, 1893. 1893 *The Philanderer*, 1898, 1898. 1893 *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, 1902, 1898. 1894 *Arms and the Man*, 1894, 1898. 1894 *Candida*, 1895, 1898. 1895 *The Man of Destiny*, 1897, 1898. 1896 *You Never Can Tell*, 1898, 1898. 1896 *The Devil's Disciple*, 1897, 1901. 1898 *Caesar and Cleopatra*, 1899, 1901. 1899 *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*, 1899, 1901. 1901 *The Admirable Bashville*, 1902, 1909 (dramatization in verse of Shaw's novel *Cashel Byron's Profession*. Productions under the title *Cashel Byron's Profession* are of dramatizations not by Shaw). 1903 *Man and Superman*, 1903, 1903. 1904 *John Bull's Other Island*, 1904, 1907. 1904 *How He Lied to Her Husband*, 1904, 1907 (one act). 1905 *Major Barbara*, 1905, 1907. 1905 *Passion, Poison, and Petrification, or, The Fatal Gazogene*, 1905, 1926 (one act). 1906 *The Doctor's Dilemma*, 1906, 1911. 1907 *The Interlude at the Playhouse*, 1907, 1907 (one act). 1908 *Getting Married* 1908, 1911. 1909 *The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet*, 1909, 1911 (one act). 1909 *Press Cuttings*, 1909, 1926 (one act). 1909 *The Fascinating Foundling*, 1909, 1926 (one act). 1909 *The Glimpse of Reality*, 1927, 1926 (one act). 1910 *Misalliance*, 1910, 1914. 1910 *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*, 1910, 1914 (one act). 1911 *Fanny's First Play*, 1911, 1914. 1912 *Androcles and the Lion*, 1912, 1916. 1912 *Overruled*, 1912, 1916 (one act). 1912 *Pygmalion*, 1913, 1916. 1913 *Great Catherine*, 1913, 1919. 1913 *The Music Cure*, 1914, 1926 (one act). 1915 *O'Flaherty, V.C.*, 1917, 1919 (one act). 1916 *The Inca of Perusalem*, 1916, 1919 (one act). 1916 *Augustus Does His Bit*, 1917, 1919 (one act). 1917 *Annajanska, the Bolshevik Empress*, 1918, 1919 (one act). 1919 *Heartbreak House*, 1909, 1919. 1920 *Back to Methuselah*, 1922, 1921 (a play cycle in five parts: I, *In the Beginning*, B.C. 4004; II, *The Gospel of the Brothers Barnabas*, A.D. 1920; III, *The Thing Happens*, A.D. 2170; IV, *The Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman*, A.D. 3000; V,

As Far as Thought Can Reach, A.D. 31920). 1922 *Jitta's Atonement*, 1923, 1926 ("translation" of *Frau Gitta's Sühne*, by Siegfried Trebitsch). 1923 *Saint Joan*, 1923, 1924. 1929 *The Apple Cart*, 1929, 1931. 1931 *Too True to Be Good*, 1932, 1934. 1933 *Village Wooing*, 1934, 1934. 1933 *On the Rocks*, 1933, 1934. 1934 *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*, 1935, 1936. 1934 *The Six of Calais*, 1934, 1936 (one act). 1935 *The Millionairess*, 1936, 1936. 1937 *Cymbeline Refinished*, 1937, 1947 (Shaw's substitute for the fifth act of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, in verse). 1938 *Geneva*, 1938, 1939 (This play was much rewritten after first publication, and subsequent editions differ). 1939 *In Good King Charles's Golden Days*, 1939, 1939. 1948 *Buoyant Billions*, 1948, 1950. 1949 *Shakes versus Shaw*, 1949, 1951 (a puppet play, one act). 1950 *Farfetched Fables*, 1950, 1951. 1950 *Why She Would Not*, (unfinished, unproduced), 1956.

SCREENWRITING

1938 *Pygmalion*. 1941 *Major Barbara*. 1945 *Caesar and Cleopatra*.

WRITINGS ON DRAMA

The Quintessence of Ibsenism, 1891, 1913. *Dramatic Opinions and Essays*, selected by James Huneker, 1906; re-edited and expanded by Shaw as *Our Theatres in the Nineties*, 1932, 1948, from his contributions as dramatic critic to *The Saturday Review*, 1895-1898. Prefaces to: *Widowers' Houses*, 1893; *Plays Pleasant*, 1898; *Plays Unpleasant*, 1898; *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, 1902, 1930; *Three Plays for Puritans*, 1901; *Man and Superman*, 1903; *The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet*, 1911; *Overruled*, 1916; *Great Catherine*, 1919; *Heartbreak House*, 1919; *Back to Methuselah*, 1921. Preface to *Three Plays* by Brieux, 1911. Preface to *Three Plays* by William Archer, 1927. *The Art of Rehearsal*, 1928. *Ellen Terry and Bernard Shaw: a Correspondence*, ed. by Christopher St. John, 1931. *Bernard Shaw and Mrs. Patrick Campbell, Their Correspondence*, 1952. *Advice to a Young Critic*, 1955. See also *Shaw on Theatre*, edited by E. J. West, 1958. Various fugitive pieces in periodicals.

¹ See *Contemporary Drama 11 Plays*, for a more extended summary of Shaw's career.

MAN AND SUPERMAN

ACT I

ROEBUCK RAMSDEN is in his study, opening the morning's letters. The study, handsomely and solidly furnished, proclaims the man of means. Not a speck of dust is visible: it is clear that there are at least two housemaids and a parlormaid downstairs, and a housekeeper upstairs who does not let them spare elbow-grease. Even the top of ROEBUCK's head is polished: on a sunshiny day he could heliograph his orders to distant camps by merely nodding. In no other respect, however, does he suggest the military man. It is in active civil life that men get his broad air of importance, his dignified expectation of deference, his determinate mouth disarmed and refined since the hour of his success by the withdrawal of opposition and the concession of comfort and precedence and power. He is more than a highly respectable man: he is marked out as a president of highly respectable men, a chairman among directors, an alderman among councillors, a mayor among aldermen. Four tufts of iron-grey hair, which will soon be as white as isinglass, and are in other respects not at all unlike it, grow in two symmetrical pairs above his ears and at the angles of his spreading jaws. He wears a black frock coat, a white waistcoat (it is bright spring weather), and trousers, neither black nor perceptibly blue, of one of those indefinitely mixed hues which the modern clothier has produced to harmonize with the religions of respectable men. He has not been out of doors yet today; so he still wears his slippers, his boots being ready for him on the hearthrug. Surmising that he has no valet, and seeing that he has no secretary with a shorthand notebook and a typewriter, one meditates on how little our great bourgeois domesticity has been disturbed by new fashions and methods, or by the enterprise of the railway and hotel companies which sell you a Saturday to Monday of life at Folkestone as a real gentleman for two guineas, first class fares both ways included. How old is ROEBUCK? The question is

important on the threshold of a drama of ideas; for under such circumstances everything depends on whether his adolescence belonged to the sixties or to the eighties. He was born, as a matter of fact, in 1839, and was a Unitarian and Free Trader from his boyhood, and an Evolutionist from the publication of the *Origin of Species*. Consequently he has always classed himself as an advanced thinker and fearlessly outspoken reformer.

Sitting at his writing table, he has on his right the windows giving on Portland Place. Through these, as through a proscenium, the curious spectator may contemplate his profile as well as the blinds will permit. On his left is the inner wall, with a stately bookcase, and the door not quite in the middle, but somewhat further from him. Against the wall opposite him are two busts on pillars: one, to his left, of John Bright; the other, to his right, of Mr¹ Herbert Spencer. Between them hang an engraved portrait of Richard Cobden; enlarged photographs of Martineau, Huxley, and George Eliot;² autotypes of allegories by Mr G. F. Watts (for ROEBUCK believes in the fine arts with all the earnestness of a man who does not understand them), and an impression of Dupont's engraving of Delaroche's *Beaux Arts* hemicycle, representing the great men of all ages. On the wall behind him, above the mantelshelf, is a family portrait of impenetrable obscurity.

A chair stands near the writing table for the convenience of business visitors. Two other chairs are against the wall between the busts.

[A PARLORMAID enters with a visitor's card. ROEBUCK takes it, and nods, pleased. Evidently a welcome caller.]

Ramsden. Shew him in.

[The PARLORMAID goes out and returns with the visitor.]

¹ The play follows Shaw's spellings.

² These six were leaders of "advanced" thought in the third quarter of the 19th century.

The Maid. Mr Robinson.

[MR ROBINSON is really an uncommonly nice looking young fellow. He must, one thinks, be the *jeune premier*; for it is not in reason to suppose that a second such attractive male figure should appear in one story. The slim, shapely frame, the elegant suit of new mourning, the small head and regular features, the pretty little moustache, the frank clear eyes, the wholesome bloom on the youthful complexion, the well brushed glossy hair, not curly, but of fine texture and good dark color, the arch of good nature in the eyebrows, the erect forehead and neatly pointed chin, all announce the man who will love and suffer later on. And that he will not do so without sympathy is guaranteed by an engaging sincerity and eager modest serviceableness which stamp him as a man of amiable nature. The moment he appears, RAMSDEN'S face expands into fatherly liking and welcome, an expression which drops into one of decorous grief as the young man approaches him with sorrow in his face as well as in his black clothes. RAMSDEN seems to know the nature of the bereavement. As the visitor advances silently to the writing table, the old man rises and shakes his hand across it without a word: a long, affectionate shake which tells the story of a recent sorrow common to both.]

Ramsden. [Concluding the handshake and cheering up.] Well, well, Octavius, it's the common lot. We must all face it some day. Sit down.

[OCTAVIUS takes the visitor's chair.

RAMSDEN replaces himself in his own.]

Octavius. Yes: we must face it, Mr Ramsden. But I owed him a great deal. He did everything for me that my father could have done if he had lived.

Ramsden. He had no son of his own, you see.

Octavius. But he had daughters; and yet he was as good to my sister as to me. And his death was so sudden! I always intended to thank him—to let him know that I had not taken all his care of me as a matter of course, as any boy takes his father's care. But I waited for an opportunity; and now he is dead—dropped without a moment's warning. He will never know what I felt.

[He takes out his handkerchief and cries unaffectedly.]

Ramsden. How do we know that, Octavius? He may know it: we cannot tell.

Come! don't grieve. [OCTAVIUS masters himself and puts up his handkerchief.] That's right. Now let me tell you something to console you. The last time I saw him—it was in this very room—he said to me: "Tavy is a generous lad and the soul of honor; and when I see how little consideration other men get from their sons, I realize how much better than a son he's been to me." There! Doesn't that do you good?

Octavius. Mr Ramsden: he used to say to me that he had met only one man in the world who was the soul of honor, and that was Roebuck Ramsden.

Ramsden. Oh, that was his partiality: we were very old friends, you know. But there was something else he used to say about you. I wonder whether I ought to tell you or not!

Octavius. You know best.

Ramsden. It was something about his daughter.

Octavius. [Eagerly.] About Ann! Oh, do tell me that, Mr Ramsden.

Ramsden. Well, he said he was glad, after all, you were not his son, because he thought that someday Annie and you—[OCTAVIUS blushes vividly.] Well, perhaps I shouldn't have told you. But he was in earnest.

Octavius. Oh, if only I thought I had a chance! You know, Mr Ramsden, I don't care about money or about what people call position; and I can't bring myself to take an interest in the business of struggling for them. Well, Ann has a most exquisite nature; but she is so accustomed to be in the thick of that sort of thing that she thinks a man's character incomplete if he is not ambitious. She knows that if she married me she would have to reason herself out of being ashamed of me for not being a big success of some kind.

Ramsden. [Getting up and planting himself with his back to the fireplace.] Nonsense, my boy, nonsense! You're too modest. What does she know about the real value of men at her age? [More seriously.] Besides, she's a wonderfully dutiful girl. Her father's wish would be sacred to her. Do you know that since she grew up to years of discretion, I don't believe she has ever once given her own wish as a reason for doing anything or not doing it. It's always "Father wishes me to," or "Mother wouldn't like it." It's really almost a fault in her. I have often told her she must learn to think for herself.

Octavius. [Shaking his head.] I couldn't ask her to marry me because her father wished it, Mr Ramsden.

Ramsden. Well, perhaps not. No: of

course not. I see that. No: you certainly couldnt. But when you win her on your own merits, it will be a great happiness to her to fulfil her father's desire as well as her own. Eh? Come! youll ask her, won't you?

Octavius. [With sad gaiety.] At all events I promise you I shall never ask anyone else.

Ramsden. Oh, you shant need to. She'll accept you, my boy—although [*Here he suddenly becomes very serious indeed.*] you have one great drawback.

Octavius. [Anxiously.] What drawback is that, Mr Ramsden? I should rather say which of my many drawbacks?

Ramsden. I'll tell you, Octavius. [*He takes from the table a book bound in red cloth.*] I have in my hand a copy of the most infamous, the most scandalous, the most mischievous, the most blackguardly book that ever escaped burning at the hands of the common hangman. I have not read it: I would not soil my mind with such filth; but I have read what the papers say of it. The title is quite enough for me. [*He reads it.*] *The Revolutionist's Handbook and Pocket Companion.* By John Tanner, M.I.R.C., Member of the Idle Rich Class.

Octavius. [Smiling.] But Jack—

Ramsden. [Testily.] For goodness' sake, dont call him Jack under my roof. [*He throws the book violently down on the table. Then, somewhat relieved, he comes past the table to OCTAVIUS, and addresses him at close quarters with impressive gravity.*] Now, Octavius, I know that my dead friend was right when he said you were a generous lad. I know that this man was your school-fellow, and that you feel bound to stand by him because there was a boyish friendship between you. But I ask you to consider the altered circumstances. You were treated as a son in my friend's house. You lived there; and your friends could not be turned from the door. This man Tanner was in and out there on your account almost from his childhood. He addresses Annie by her Christian name as freely as you do. Well, while her father was alive, that was her father's business, not mine. This man Tanner was only a boy to him: his opinions were something to be laughed at, like a man's hat on a child's head. But now Tanner is a grown man and Annie a grown woman. And her father is gone. We dont as yet know the exact terms of his will; but he often talked it over with me; and I have no more doubt than I have that youre sitting there that the will appoints me Annie's trustee and guardian. [*Forcibly.*] Now I tell you, once for all, I cant and I

wont have Annie placed in such a position that she must, out of regard for you, suffer the intimacy of this fellow Tanner. It's not fair: it's not right: it's not kind. What are you going to do about it?

Octavius. But Ann herself has told Jack that whatever his opinions are, he will always be welcome because he knew her dear father.

Ramsden. [Out of patience.] That girl's mad about her duty to her parents. [*He starts off like a goaded ox in the direction of John Bright, in whose expression there is no sympathy for him. As he speaks he fumes down to Herbert Spencer, who receives him still more coldly.*] Excuse me, Octavius; but there are limits to social toleration. You know that I am not a bigoted or prejudiced man. You know that I am plain Roebuck Ramsden when other men who have done less have got handles to their names, because I have stood for equality and liberty of conscience while they were truckling to the Church and to the aristocracy. Whitefield and I lost chance after chance through our advanced opinions. But I draw the line at Anarchism and Free Love and that sort of thing. If I am to be Annie's guardian, she will have to learn that she has a duty to me. I wont have it: I will not have it. She must forbid John Tanner the house; and so must you.

[*THE PARLORMAID returns.*]

Octavius. But—

Ramsden. [Calling his attention to the SERVANT.] Sssh! Well?

The Maid. Mr Tanner wishes to see you, sir.

Ramsden. Mr Tanner!

Octavius. Jack!

Ramsden. How dare Mr Tanner call on me! Say I cannot see him.

Octavius. [Hurt.] I am sorry you are turning my friend from your door like that.

The Maid. [Calmly.] He's not at the door, sir. He's upstairs in the drawing room with Miss Ramsden. He came with Mrs Whitefield and Miss Ann and Miss Robinson, sir.

[*RAMSDEN's feelings are beyond words.*]

Octavius. [Grinning.] Thats very like Jack, Mr Ramsden. You must see him, even if it's only to turn him out.

Ramsden. [Hammering out his words with suppressed fury.] Go upstairs and ask Mr Tanner to be good enough to step down here. [*THE PARLORMAID goes out; and RAMSDEN returns to the fireplace, as to a fortified position.*] I must say that of all the confounded pieces of impertinence—well, if these are

Anarchist manners, I hope you like them. And Annie with him! Annie! A——

[*He chokes.*]

Octavius. Yes: that's what surprises me. He's so desperately afraid of Ann. There must be something the matter.

[MR JOHN TANNER suddenly opens the door and enters. He is too young to be described simply as a big man with a beard. But it is already plain that middle life will find him in that category. He has still some of the slimness of youth; but youthfulness is not the effect he aims at: his frock coat would befet a prime minister; and a certain high chested carriage of the shoulders, a lofty pose of the head, and the Olympian majesty with which a mane, or rather a huge wisp, of hazel colored hair is thrown back from an imposing brow, suggest Jupiter rather than Apollo. He is prodigiously fluent of speech, restless, excitable (mark the snorting nostril and the restless blue eye, just the thirty-secondth of an inch too wide open), possibly a little mad. He is carefully dressed, not from the vanity that cannot resist finery, but from a sense of the importance of everything he does which leads him to make as much of paying a call as other men do of getting married or laying a foundation stone. A sensitive, susceptible, exaggerative, earnest man: a megalomaniac, who would be lost without a sense of humor.¹

Just at present the sense of humor is in abeyance. To say that he is excited is nothing: all his moods are phases of excitement. He is now in the panic-stricken phase; and he walks straight up to RAMSDEN as if with the fixed intention of shooting him on his own hearth-rug. But what he pulls from his breast pocket is not a pistol, but a foolscap document which he thrusts under the indignant nose of RAMSDEN as he exclaims.]

Tanner. Ramsden: do you know what this is?

Ramsden. [*Loftily.*] No, sir.

Tanner. It's a copy of Whitefield's will. Ann got it this morning.

Ramsden. When you say Ann, you mean, I presume, Miss Whitefield.

Tanner. I mean our Ann, your Ann, Tavy's Ann, and now, Heaven help me, my Ann!

Octavius. [*Rising, very pale.*] What do you mean?

Tanner. Mean! [*He holds up the will.*] Do you know who is appointed Ann's guardian by this will?

Ramsden. [*Coolly.*] I believe I am.

Tanner. You! You and I, man. I! I!! I!!! Both of us!

[*He flings the will down on the writing table.*]

Ramsden. You! Impossible.

Tanner. It's only too hideously true. [*He throws himself into OCTAVIUS's chair.*] Ramsden: get me out of it somehow. You don't know Ann as well as I do. She'll commit every crime a respectable woman can; and she'll justify every one of them by saying that it was the wish of her guardians. She'll put everything on us; and we shall have no more control over her than a couple of mice over a cat.

Octavius. Jack: I wish you wouldn't talk like that about Ann.

Tanner. This chap's in love with her: that's another complication. Well, she'll either jilt him and say I didn't approve of him, or marry him and say you ordered her to. I tell you, this is the most staggering blow that has ever fallen on a man of my age and temperament.

Ramsden. Let me see that will, sir. [*He goes to the writing table and picks it up.*] I cannot believe that my old friend Whitefield would have shewn such a want of confidence in me as to associate me with——

[*His countenance falls as he reads.*]

Tanner. It's all my own doing: that's the horrible irony of it. He told me one day that you were to be Ann's guardian; and like a fool I began arguing with him about the folly of leaving a young woman under the control of an old man with obsolete ideas.

Ramsden. [*Stupent.*] My ideas obsolete!!!!!!

Tanner. Totally. I had just finished an essay called Down with Government by the Greyhaired; and I was full of arguments and illustrations. I said the proper thing was to combine the experience of an old hand with the vitality of a young one. Hang me if he didn't take me at my word and alter his will—it's dated only a fortnight after that conversation—appointing me as joint guardian with you!

Ramsden. [*Pale and determined.*] I shall refuse to act.

Tanner. What's the good of that? I've been refusing all the way from Richmond; but Ann keeps on saying that of course she's only an orphan; and that she can't expect the

¹ At the Court Theatre production of *Man and Superman* in 1905, Harley Granville Barker, playing Tanner, was made up to look like Shaw.

people who were glad to come to the house in her father's time to trouble much about her now. That's the latest game. An orphan! It's like hearing an ironclad talk about being in the mercy of the wind and waves.

Octavius. This is not fair, Jack. She is an orphan. And you ought to stand by her.

Tanner. Stand by her! What danger is she in? She has the law on her side; she has popular sentiment on her side; she has plenty of money and no conscience. All she wants with me is to load up all her moral responsibilities on me, and do as she likes at the expense of my character. I can't control her; and she can compromise me as much as she likes. I might as well be her husband.

Ramsden. You can refuse to accept the guardianship. I shall certainly refuse to hold it jointly with you.

Tanner. Yes; and what will she say to that? what does she say to it? Just that her father's wishes are sacred to her, and that she shall always look up to me as her guardian whether I care to face the responsibility or not. Refuse! You might as well refuse to accept the embraces of a boa constrictor when once it gets round your neck.

Octavius. This sort of talk is not kind to me, Jack.

Tanner. [*Rising and going to OCTAVIUS to console him, but still lamenting.*] If he wanted a young guardian, why didn't he appoint Tavy?

Ramsden. Ah! why indeed?

Octavius. I will tell you. He sounded me about it; but I refused the trust because I loved her. I had no right to let myself be forced on her as a guardian by her father. He spoke to her about it; and she said I was right. You know I love her, Mr Ramsden; and Jack knows it too. If Jack loved a woman, I would not compare her to a boa constrictor in his presence, however much I might dislike her.

[*He sits down between the busts and turns his face to the wall.*]

Ramsden. I do not believe that Whitefield was in his right senses when he made that will. You have admitted that he made it under your influence.

Tanner. You ought to be pretty well obliged to me for my influence. He leaves you two thousand five hundred for your trouble. He leaves Tavy a dowry for his sister and five thousand for himself.

Octavius. [*His tears flowing afresh.*] Oh, I can't take it. He was too good to us.

Tanner. You won't get it, my boy, if Ramsden upsets the will.

Ramsden. Ha! I see. You have got me in a cleft stick.

Tanner. He leaves me nothing but the charge of Ann's morals, on the ground that I have already more money than is good for me. That shows that he had his wits about him, doesn't it?

Ramsden. [*Grimly.*] I admit that.

Octavius. [*Rising and coming from his refuge by the wall.*] Mr Ramsden: I think you are prejudiced against Jack. He is a man of honor, and incapable of abusing—

Tanner. Dont, Tavy: you'll make me ill. I am not a man of honor: I am a man struck down by a dead hand. Tavy: you must marry her after all and take her off my hands. And I had set my heart on saving you from her!

Octavius. Oh, Jack, you talk of saving me from my highest happiness.

Tanner. Yes, a lifetime of happiness. If it were only the first half hour's happiness, Tavy, I would buy it for you with my last penny. But a lifetime of happiness! No man alive could bear it: it would be hell on earth.

Ramsden. [*Violently.*] Stuff, sir. Talk sense; or else go and waste someone else's time: I have something better to do than listen to your fooleries.

[*He positively kicks his way to his table and resumes his seat.*]

Tanner. You hear him, Tavy! Not an idea in his head later than eighteensixty. We can't leave Ann with no other guardian to turn to.

Ramsden. I am proud of your contempt for my character and opinions, sir. Your own are set forth in that book, I believe.

Tanner. [*Eagerly going to the table.*] What! You've got my book! What do you think of it?

Ramsden. Do you suppose I would read such a book, sir?

Tanner. Then why did you buy it?

Ramsden. I did not buy it, sir. It has been sent me by some foolish lady who seems to admire your views. I was about to dispose of it when Octavius interrupted me. I shall do so now, with your permission.

[*He throws the book into the waste-paper basket with such vehemence that TANNER recoils under the impression that it is being thrown at his head.*]

Tanner. You have no more manners than I have myself. However, that saves ceremony between us. [*He sits down again.*] What do you intend to do about this will?

Octavius. May I make a suggestion?

Ramsden. Certainly, Octavius.

Octavius. Amn't we forgetting that Ann

herself may have some wishes in this matter?

Ramsden. I quite intend that Annie's wishes shall be consulted in every reasonable way. But she is only a woman, and a young and inexperienced woman at that.

Tanner. Ramsden: I begin to pity you.

Ramsden. [*Hotly.*] I dont want to know how you feel towards me, Mr Tanner.

Tanner. Ann will do just exactly what she likes. And whats more, she'll force us to advise her to do it; and she'll put the blame on us if it turns out badly. So, as Tavy is longing to see her——

Octavius. [*Shyly.*] I am not, Jack.

Tanner. You lie, Tavy: you are. So lets have her down from the drawing room and ask her what she intends us to do. Off with you, Tavy, and fetch her. [*TAVY turns to go.*] And dont be long; for the strained relations between myself and Ramsden will make the interval rather painful.

[RAMSDEN compresses his lips, but says nothing.]

Octavius. Never mind him, Mr Ramsden. He's not serious. [*He goes out.*]

Ramsden. [*Very deliberately.*] Mr Tanner: you are the most impudent person I have ever met.

Tanner. [*Seriously.*] I know it, Ramsden. Yet even I cannot wholly conquer shame. We live in an atmosphere of shame. We are ashamed of everything that is real about us; ashamed of ourselves, of our relatives, of our incomes, of our accents, of our opinions, of our experience, just as we are ashamed of our naked skins. Good Lord, my dear Ramsden, we are ashamed to walk, ashamed to ride in an omnibus, ashamed to hire a hansom instead of keeping a carriage, ashamed of keeping one horse instead of two and a groom-gardener instead of a coachman and footman. The more things a man is ashamed of, the more respectable he is. Why, youre ashamed to buy my book, ashamed to read it: the only thing youre not ashamed of is to judge me for it without having read it; and even that only means that youre ashamed to have heterodox opinions. Look at the effect I produce because my fairy godmother withheld from me this gift of shame. I have every possible virtue that a man can have except——

Ramsden. I am glad you think so well of yourself.

Tanner. All you mean by that is that you think I ought to be ashamed of talking about my virtues. You dont mean that I havnt got them: you know perfectly well that I am as sober and honest a citizen as yourself,

as truthful personally, and much more truthful politically and morally.

Ramsden. [*Touched on his most sensitive point.*] I deny that. I will not allow you or any man to treat me as if I were a mere member of the British public. I detest its prejudices; I scorn its narrowness; I demand the right to think for myself. You pose as an advanced man. Let me tell you that I was an advanced man before you were born.

Tanner. I knew it was a long time ago.

Ramsden. I am as advanced as ever I was. I defy you to prove that I have ever hauled down the flag. I am more advanced than ever I was. I grow more advanced every day.

Tanner. More advanced in years, Polonius.

Ramsden. Polonius! So you are Hamlet, I suppose.

Tanner. No: I am only the most impudent person youve ever met. Thats your notion of a thoroughly bad character. When you want to give me a piece of your mind, you ask yourself, as a just and upright man, what is the worst you can fairly say of me. Thief, liar, forger, adulterer, perjurer, glutton, drunkard? Not one of these names fit me. You have to fall back on my deficiency in shame. Well, I admit it. I even congratulate myself; for if I were ashamed of my real self, I should cut as stupid a figure as any of the rest of you. Cultivate a little impudence, Ramsden; and you will become quite a remarkable man.

Ramsden. I have no——

Tanner. You have no desire for that sort of notoriety. Bless you, I knew that answer would come as well as I know that a box of matches will come out of an automatic machine when I put a penny in the slot: you would be ashamed to say anything else.

[*The crushing retort for which MR RAMSDEN has been visibly collecting his forces is lost for ever; for at this point OCTAVIUS returns with MISS ANN WHITEFIELD and her MOTHER; and RAMSDEN springs up and hurries to the door to receive them. Whether ANN is good-looking or not depends upon your taste; also and perhaps chiefly on your age and sex. To OCTAVIUS she is an enchantingly beautiful woman, in whose presence the world becomes transfigured, and the puny limits of individual consciousness are suddenly made infinite by a mystic memory of the whole life of the race to its beginnings in the east, or even back to the paradise from which it fell. She is to him the reality of ro-*

mance, the inner good sense of nonsense, the unveiling of his eyes, the freeing of his soul, the abolition of time, place, and circumstance, the etherealization of his blood into rapturous rivers of the very water of life itself, the revelation of all the mysteries and the sanctification of all the dogmas. To her MOTHER she is, to put it as moderately as possible, nothing whatever of the kind. Not that OCTAVIUS's admiration is in any way ridiculous or discreditable. ANN is a well formed creature, as far as that goes; and she is perfectly ladylike, graceful, and comely, with ensnaring eyes and hair. Besides, instead of making herself an eyesore, like her mother, she has devised a mourning costume of black and violet silk which does honor to her late father and reveals the family tradition of brave unconventionality by which RAMSDEN sets such store.

But all this is beside the point as an explanation of ANN's charm. Turn up her nose, give a cast to her eye, replace her black and violet confection by the apron and feathers of a flower girl, strike all the aitches out of her speech, and ANN would still make men dream. Vitality is as common as humanity; but, like humanity, it sometimes rises to genius; and ANN is one of the vital geniuses. Not at all, if you please, an oversexed person: that is a vital defect, not a true excess. She is a perfectly respectable, perfectly self-controlled woman, and looks it; though her pose is fashionably frank and impulsive. She inspires confidence as a person who will do nothing she does not mean to do; also some fear, perhaps, as a woman who will probably do everything she means to do without taking more account of other people than may be necessary and what she calls right. In short, what the weaker of her own sex sometimes call a cat.

Nothing can be more decorous than her entry and her reception by RAMSDEN, whom she kisses. The late Mr Whitefield would be gratified almost to impatience by the long faces of the men (except TANNER, who is fidgety), the silent handgrasps, the sympathetic placing of chairs, the sniffing of the widow, and the liquid eye of the daughter, whose heart, apparently, will not let her control her tongue to speech. RAMSDEN and OCTAVIUS take the two chairs from the wall, and place them for the two ladies;

but ANN comes to TANNER and takes his chair, which he offers with a brusque gesture, subsequently relieving his irritation by sitting down on the corner of the writing table with studied indecorum. OCTAVIUS gives MRS WHITEFIELD a chair next ANN, and himself takes the vacant one which RAMSDEN has placed under the nose of the effigy of Mr Herbert Spencer.

MRS WHITEFIELD, by the way, is a little woman, whose faded flaxen hair looks like straw on an egg. She has an expression of muddled shrewdness, a squeak of protest in her voice, and an odd air of continually elbowing away some larger person who is crushing her into a corner. One guesses her as one of those women who are conscious of being treated as silly and negligible, and who, without having strength enough to assert themselves effectually, at any rate never submit to their fate. There is a touch of chivalry in OCTAVIUS's scrupulous attention to her, even whilst his whole soul is absorbed by ANN.

RAMSDEN goes solemnly back to his magisterial seat at the writing table, ignoring TANNER, and opens the proceedings.]

Ramsden. I am sorry, Annie, to force business on you at a sad time like the present. But your poor dear father's will has raised a very serious question. You have read it, I believe? [ANN assents with a nod and a catch of her breath, too much affected to speak.] I must say I am surprised to find Mr Tanner named as joint guardian and trustee with myself of you and Rhoda. [A pause. They all look portentous; but have nothing to say. RAMSDEN, a little ruffled by the lack of any response, continues.] I don't know that I can consent to act under such conditions. Mr Tanner has, I understand, some objection also; but I do not profess to understand its nature: he will no doubt speak for himself. But we are agreed that we can decide nothing until we know your views. I am afraid I shall have to ask you to choose between my sole guardianship and that of Mr Tanner; for I fear it is impossible for us to undertake a joint arrangement.

Ann. [In a low musical voice.] Mamma—

Mrs Whitefield. [Hastily.] Now, Ann, I do beg you not to put it on me. I have no opinion on the subject; and if I had, it would probably not be attended to. I am quite content with whatever you three think best.

[TANNER turns his head and looks fixedly at RAMSDEN, who angrily refuses to receive this mute communication.]

Ann. [Resuming in the same gentle voice, ignoring her MOTHER'S bad taste.] Mamma knows that she is not strong enough to bear the whole responsibility for me and Rhoda without some help and advice. Rhoda must have a guardian; and though I am older, I do not think any young unmarried woman should be left quite to her own guidance. I hope you agree with me, Granny?

Tanner. [Starting.] Granny! Do you intend to call your guardians Granny?

Ann. Dont be foolish, Jack. Mr Ramsden has always been Grandpapa Roebuck to me: I am Granny's Annie; and he is Annie's Granny. I christened him so when I first learned to speak.

Ramsden. [Sarcastically.] I hope you are satisfied, Mr Tanner. Go on, Annie: I quite agree with you.

Ann. Well, if I am to have a guardian, can I set aside anybody whom my dear father appointed for me?

Ramsden. [Biting his lip.] You approve of your father's choice, then?

Ann. It is not for me to approve or disapprove. I accept it. My father loved me and knew best what was good for me.

Ramsden. Of course I understand your feeling, Annie. It is what I should have expected of you; and it does you credit. But it does not settle the question so completely as you think. Let me put a case to you. Suppose you were to discover that I had been guilty of some disgraceful action—that I was not the man your poor dear father took me for! Would you still consider it right that I should be Rhoda's guardian?

Ann. I cant imagine you doing anything disgraceful, Granny.

Tanner. [To RAMSDEN.] You havnt done anything of the sort, have you?

Ramsden. [Indignantly.] No, sir.

Mrs Whitefield. [Placidly.] Well, then, why suppose it?

Ann. You see, Granny, Mamma would not like me to suppose it.

Ramsden. [Much perplexed.] You are both so full of natural and affectionate feeling in these family matters that it is very hard to put the situation fairly before you.

Tanner. Besides, my friend, you are not putting the situation fairly before them.

Ramsden. [Sulkily.] Put it yourself, then.

Tanner. I will. Ann: Ramsden thinks I am not fit to be your guardian; and I quite agree with him. He considers that if your father had read my book, he wouldnt have

appointed me. That book is the disgraceful action he has been talking about. He thinks it's your duty for Rhoda's sake to ask him to act alone and to make me withdraw. Say the word; and I will.

Ann. But I havnt read your book, Jack.

Tanner. [Diving at the waste-paper basket and fishing the book out for her.] Then read it at once and decide.

Ramsden. [Vehemently.] If I am to be your guardian, I positively forbid you to read that book, Annie.

[He smites the table with his fist and rises.]

Ann. Of course not if you dont wish it.

[She puts the book on the table.]

Tanner. If one guardian is to forbid you to read the other guardian's book, how are we to settle it? Suppose I order you to read it! What about your duty to me?

Ann. [Gently.] I am sure you would never purposely force me into a painful dilemma, Jack.

Ramsden. [Irritably.] Yes, yes, Annie: this is all very well, and, as I said, quite natural and becoming. But you must make a choice one way or the other. We are as much in a dilemma as you.

Ann. I feel that I am too young, too inexperienced, to decide. My father's wishes are sacred to me.

Mrs Whitefield. If you two men wont carry them out I must say it is rather hard that you should put the responsibility on Ann. It seems to me that people are always putting things on other people in this world.

Ramsden. I am sorry you take it in that way.

Ann. [Touchingly.] Do you refuse to accept me as your ward, Granny?

Ramsden. No: I never said that. I greatly object to act with Mr Tanner: thats all.

Mrs Whitefield. Why? What's the matter with poor Jack?

Tanner. My views are too advanced for him.

Ramsden. [Indignantly.] They are not. I deny it.

Ann. Of course not. What nonsense! Nobody is more advanced than Granny. I am sure it is Jack himself who has made all the difficulty. Come, Jack! be kind to me in my sorrow. You dont refuse to accept me as your ward, do you?

Tanner. [Gloomily.] No. I let myself in for it; so I suppose I must face it.

[He turns away to the bookcase, and stands there, moodily studying the titles of the volumes.]

Ann. [Rising and expanding with subdued but gushing delight.] Then we are all agreed;

and my dear father's will is to be carried out. You dont know what a joy that is to me and to my mother! [*She goes to RAMSDEN and presses both his hands, saying.*] And I shall have my dear Granny to help and advise me. [*She casts a glance at TANNER over her shoulder.*] And Jack the Giant Killer. [*She goes past her MOTHER to OCTAVIUS.*] And Jack's inseparable friend Ricky-ticky-tavy. [*He blushes and looks inexpressibly foolish.*]

Mrs Whitefield. [*Rising and shaking her widow's weeds straight.*] Now that you are Ann's guardian, Mr Ramsden, I wish you would speak to her about her habit of giving people nicknames. They cant be expected to like it. [*She moves towards the door.*]

Ann. How can you say such a thing, Mamma! [*Glowing with affectionate remorse.*] Oh, I wonder can you be right! Have I been inconsiderate? [*She turns to OCTAVIUS, who is sitting astride his chair with his elbows on the back of it. Putting her hand on his forehead she turns his face up suddenly.*] Do you want to be treated like a grown-up man? Must I call you Mr Robinson in future?

Octavius. [*Earnestly.*] Oh please call me Ricky-ticky-tavy. "Mr Robinson" would hurt me cruelly.

Ann. [*Laughs and pats his cheek with her finger; then comes back to RAMSDEN.*] You know I'm beginning to think that Granny is rather a piece of impertinence. But I never dreamt of its hurting you.

Ramsden. [*Breezily, as he pats her affectionately on the back.*] My dear Annie, nonsense. I insist on Granny. I wont answer to any other name than Annie's Granny.

Ann. [*Gratefully.*] You all spoil me, except Jack.

Tanner. [*Over his shoulder, from the bookcase.*] I think you ought to call me Mr Tanner.

Ann. [*Gently.*] No you dont, Jack. Thats like the things you say on purpose to shock people: those who know you pay no attention to them. But, if you like, I'll call you after your famous ancestor Don Juan.

Ramsden. Don Juan!

Ann. [*Innocently.*] Oh, is there any harm in it? I didnt know. Then I certainly wont call you that. May I call you Jack until I can think of something else?

Tanner. Oh, for Heaven's sake dont try to invent anything worse. I capitulate. I consent to Jack. I embrace Jack. Here endeth my first and last attempt to assert my authority.

Ann. You see, Mamma, they all really like to have pet names.

Mrs Whitefield. Well, I think you might at least drop them until we are out of mourning.

Ann. [*Reproachfully, stricken to the soul.*] Oh, how could you remind me, mother?

[*She hastily leaves the room to conceal her emotion.*]

Mrs Whitefield. Of course. My fault as usual! [*She follows ANN.*]

Tanner. [*Coming from the bookcase.*] Ramsden: we're beaten—smashed—nonentitized, like her mother.

Ramsden. Stuff, sir.

[*He follows MRS WHITEFIELD out of the room.*]

Tanner. [*Left alone with OCTAVIUS, stares whimsically at him.*] Tavy: do you want to count for something in the world?

Octavius. I want to count for something as a poet: I want to write a great play.

Tanner. With Ann as the heroine?

Octavius. Yes: I confess it.

Tanner. Take care, Tavy. The play with Ann as the heroine is all right; but if youre not very careful, by Heaven she'll marry you.

Octavius. [*Sighing.*] No such luck, Jack!

Tanner. Why, man, your head is in the lioness's mouth: you are half swallowed already—in three bites—Bite One, Ricky; Bite Two, Ticky; Bite Three, Tavy; and down you go.

Octavius. She is the same to everybody, Jack: you know her ways.

Tanner. Yes: she breaks everybody's back with the stroke of her paw; but the question is, which of us will she eat? My own opinion is that she means to eat you.

Octavius. [*Rising, pettishly.*] It's horrible to talk like that about her when she is upstairs crying for her father. But I do so want her to eat me that I can bear your brutalities because they give me hope.

Tanner. Tavy: thats the devilish side of a woman's fascination: she makes you will your own destruction.

Octavius. But it's not destruction: it's fulfilment.

Tanner. Yes, of her purpose; and that purpose is neither her happiness nor yours, but Nature's. Vitality in a woman is a blind fury of creation. She sacrifices herself to it: do you think she will hesitate to sacrifice you?

Octavius. Why, it is just because she is self-sacrificing that she will not sacrifice those she loves.

Tanner. That is the profoundest of mistakes, Tavy. It is the self-sacrificing women

that sacrifice others most recklessly. Because they are unselfish, they are kind in little things. Because they have a purpose which is not their own purpose, but that of the whole universe, a man is nothing to them but an instrument of that purpose.

Octavius. Dont be ungenerous, Jack. They take the tenderest care of us.

Tanner. Yes, as a soldier takes care of his rifle or a musician of his violin. But do they allow us any purpose of freedom of our own? Will they lend us to one another? Can the strongest man escape from them when once he is appropriated? They tremble when we are in danger, and weep when we die; but the tears are not for us, but for a father wasted, a son's breeding thrown away. They accuse us of treating them as a mere means to our pleasure; but how can so feeble and transient a folly as a man's selfish pleasure enslave a woman as the whole purpose of Nature embodied in a woman can enslave a man?

Octavius. What matter, if the slavery makes us happy?

Tanner. No matter at all if you have no purpose of your own, and are, like most men, a mere breadwinner. But you, Tavy, are an artist: that is, you have a purpose as absorbing and as unscrupulous as a woman's purpose.

Octavius. Not unscrupulous.

Tanner. Quite unscrupulous. The true artist will let his wife starve, his children go barefoot, his mother drudge for his living at seventy, sooner than work at anything but his art. To women he is half vivisector, half vampire. He gets into intimate relations with them to study them, to strip the mask of convention from them, to surprise their inmost secrets, knowing that they have the power to rouse his deepest creative energies, to rescue him from his cold reason, to make him see visions and dream dreams, to inspire him, as he calls it. He persuades women that they may do this for their own purpose whilst he really means them to do it for his. He steals the mother's milk and blackens it to make printer's ink to scoff at her and glorify ideal women with. He pretends to spare her the pangs of child-bearing so that he may have for himself the tenderness and fostering that belong of right to her children. Since marriage began, the great artist has been known as a bad husband. But he is worse: he is a child-robber, a blood-sucker, a hypocrite, and a cheat. Perish the race and wither a thousand women if only the sacrifice of them enable him to act Hamlet better, to paint a finer picture, to write a deeper poem,

a greater play, a profounder philosophy! For mark you, Tavy, the artist's work is to shew us ourselves as we really are. Our minds are nothing but this knowledge of ourselves; and he who adds a jot to such knowledge creates new mind as surely as any woman creates new men. In the rage of that creation he is as ruthless as the woman, as dangerous to her as she to him, and as horribly fascinating. Of all human struggles there is none so treacherous and remorseless as the struggle between the artist man and the mother woman. Which shall use up the other? that is the issue between them. And it is all the deadlier because, in your romanticist cant, they love one another.

Octavius. Even if it were so—and I dont admit it for a moment—it is out of the deadliest struggles that we get the noblest characters.

Tanner. Remember that the next time you meet a grizzly bear or a Bengal tiger, Tavy.

Octavius. I meant where there is love, Jack.

Tanner. Oh, the tiger will love you. There is no love sincerer than the love of food. I think Ann loves you that way: she patted your cheek as if it were a nicely underdone chop.

Octavius. You know, Jack, I should have to run away from you if I did not make it a fixed rule not to mind anything you say. You come out with perfectly revolting things sometimes.

[RAMSDEN returns, followed by ANN. They come in quickly, with their former leisurely air of decorous grief changed to one of genuine concern, and, on RAMSDEN'S part, of worry. He comes between the two men, intending to address OCTAVIUS, but pulls himself up abruptly as he sees TANNER.]

Ramsden. I hardly expected to find you still here, Mr Tanner.

Tanner. Am I in the way? Good morning, fellow guardian.

[He goes towards the door.]

Ann. Stop, Jack. Granny: he must know, sooner or later.

Ramsden. Octavius: I have a very serious piece of news for you. It is of the most private and delicate nature—of the most painful nature too, I am sorry to say. Do you wish Mr Tanner to be present whilst I explain?

Octavius. [Turning pale.] I have no secrets from Jack.

Ramsden. Before you decide that finally,

let me say that the news concerns your sister, and that it is terrible news.

Octavius. Violet! What has happened? Is she—dead?

Ramsden. I am not sure that it is not even worse than that.

Octavius. Is she badly hurt? Has there been an accident?

Ramsden. No: nothing of that sort.

Tanner. Ann: will you have the common humanity to tell us what the matter is?

Ann. [*Half whispering.*] I cant. Violet has done something dreadful. We shall have to get her away somewhere.

[*She flutters to the writing table and sits in RAMSDEN'S chair, leaving the three men to fight it out between them.*]

Octavius. [*Enlightened.*] Is that what you meant, Mr Ramsden?

Ramsden. Yes. [*OCTAVIUS sinks upon a chair, crushed.*] I am afraid there is no doubt that Violet did not really go to Eastbourne three weeks ago when we thought she was with the Parry Whitefields. And she called on a strange doctor yesterday with a wedding ring on her finger. Mrs Parry Whitefield met her there by chance; and so the whole thing came out.

Octavius. [*Rising with his fists clenched.*] Who is the scoundrel?

Ann. She wont tell us.

Octavius. [*Collapsing into the chair again.*] What a frightful thing!

Tanner. [*With angry sarcasm.*] Dreadful. Appalling. Worse than death, as Ramsden says. [*He comes to OCTAVIUS.*] What would you not give, Tavy, to turn it into a railway accident, with all her bones broken, or something equally respectable and deserving of sympathy?

Octavius. Dont be brutal, Jack.

Tanner. Brutal! Good Heavens, man, what are you crying for? Here is a woman we all supposed to be making bad water-color sketches, practising Grieg and Brahms, gadding about to concerts and parties, wasting her life and her money. We suddenly learn that she has turned from these sillinesses to the fulfilment of her highest purpose and greatest function—to increase, multiply, and replenish the earth. And instead of admiring her courage and rejoicing in her instinct; instead of crowning the completed womanhood and raising the triumphal strain of "Unto us a child is born: unto us a son is given," here you are—you who have been as merry as grigs in your mourning for the dead—all pulling long faces and looking as ashamed and disgraced as if the girl had committed the vilest of crimes.

Ramsden. [*Roaring with rage.*] I will not have these abominations uttered in my house.

[*He smites the writing table with his fist.*]

Tanner. Look here: if you insult me again I'll take you at your word and leave your house. Ann: where is Violet now?

Ann. Why? Are you going to her?

Tanner. Of course I am going to her. She wants help; she wants money; she wants respect and congratulation; she wants every chance for her child. She does not seem likely to get it from you: she shall from me. Where is she?

Ann. Dont be so headstrong, Jack. She's upstairs.

Tanner. What! Under Ramsden's sacred roof! Go and do your miserable duty, Ramsden. Hunt her out into the street. Cleanse your threshold from her contamination. Vindicate the purity of your English home. I'll go for a cab.

Ann. [*Alarmed.*] Oh, Granny, you mustnt do that.

Octavius. [*Broken-heartedly, rising.*] I'll take her away, Mr Ramsden. She had no right to come to your house.

Ramsden. [*Indignantly.*] But I am only too anxious to help her. [*Turning on TANNER.*] How dare you, sir, impute such monstrous intentions to me? I protest against it. I am ready to put down my last penny to save her from being driven to run to you for protection.

Tanner. [*Subsiding.*] It's all right, then. He's not going to act up to his principles. It's agreed that we all stand by Violet.

Octavius. But who is the man? He can make reparation by marrying her; and he shall, or he shall answer for it to me.

Ramsden. He shall, Octavius. There you speak like a man.

Tanner. Then you dont think him a scoundrel, after all?

Octavius. Not a scoundrel! He is a heartless scoundrel.

Ramsden. A damned scoundrel. I beg your pardon, Annie; but I can say no less.

Tanner. So we are to marry your sister to a damned scoundrel by way of reforming her character? On my soul, I think you are all mad.

Ann. Dont be absurd, Jack. Of course you are quite right, Tavy; but we dont know who he is: Violet wont tell us.

Tanner. What on earth does it matter who he is? He's done his part; and Violet must do the rest.

Ramsden. [*Beside himself.*] Stuff! lu-

nacy! There is a rascal in our midst, a libertine, a villain worse than a murderer; and we are not to learn who he is! In our ignorance we are to shake him by the hand; to introduce him into our homes; to trust our daughters with him; to—to——

Ann. [*Coaxingly.*] There, Granny, dont talk so loud. It's most shocking: we must all admit that; but if Violet wont tell us, what can we do? Nothing. Simply nothing.

Ramsden. Hmph! I'm not so sure of that. If any man has paid Violet any special attention, we can easily find that out. If there is any man of notoriously loose principles among us——

Tanner. Ahem!

Ramsden. [*Raising his voice.*] Yes, sir, I repeat, if there is any man of notoriously loose principles among us——

Tanner. Or any man notoriously lacking in self-control.

Ramsden. [*Aghast.*] Do you dare to suggest that *I* am capable of such an act?

Tanner. My dear Ramsden, this is an act of which every man is capable. That is what comes of getting at cross purposes with Nature. The suspicion you have just flung at me clings to us all. It's a sort of mud that sticks to the judge's ermine or the cardinal's robe as fast as to the rags of the tramp. Come, Tavy! dont look so bewildered: it might have been me: it might have been Ramsden; just as it might have been anybody. If it had, what could we do but lie and protest—as Ramsden is going to protest.

Ramsden. [*Choking.*] I—I—I——

Tanner. Guilt itself could not stammer more confusedly. And yet you know perfectly well he's innocent, Tavy.

Ramsden. [*Exhausted.*] I am glad you admit that, sir. I admit, myself, that there is an element of truth in what you say, grossly as you may distort it to gratify your malicious humor. I hope, Octavius, no suspicion of me is possible in your mind.

Octavius. Of you! No, not for a moment.

Tanner. [*Drily.*] I think he suspects me just a little.

Octavius. Jack: you couldnt—you wouldnt——

Tanner. Why not?

Octavius. [*Appalled.*] Why not!

Tanner. Oh, well, I'll tell you why not. First, you would feel bound to quarrel with me. Second, Violet doesnt like me. Third, if I had the honor of being the father of Violet's child, I should boast of it instead of denying it. So be easy: our friendship is not in danger.

Octavius. I should have put away the suspicion with horror if only you would think and feel naturally about it. I beg your pardon.

Tanner. My pardon! nonsense! And now lets sit down and have a family council. [*He sits down. The rest follow his example, more or less under protest.*] Violet is going to do the State a service; consequently she must be packed abroad like a criminal until it's over. Whats happening upstairs?

Ann. Violet is in the housekeeper's room—— by herself, of course.

Tanner. Why not in the drawing room?

Ann. Don't be absurd, Jack. Miss Ramsden is in the drawing room with my mother, considering what to do.

Tanner. Oh! the housekeeper's room is the penitentiary, I suppose; and the prisoner is waiting to be brought before her judges. The old cats!

Ann. Oh, Jack!

Ramsden. You are at present a guest beneath the roof of one of the old cats, sir. My sister is the mistress of this house.

Tanner. She would put me in the housekeeper's room, too, if she dared, Ramsden. However, I withdraw cats. Cats would have more sense. Ann: as your guardian, I order you to go to Violet at once and be particularly kind to her.

Ann. I have seen her, Jack. And I am sorry to say I am afraid she is going to be rather obstinate about going abroad. I think Tavy ought to speak to her about it.

Octavius. How can I speak to her about such a thing? [*He breaks down.*]

Ann. Don't break down, Ricky. Try to bear it for all our sakes.

Ramsden. Life is not all plays and poems, Octavius. Come! face it like a man.

Tanner. [*Chafing again.*] Poor dear brother! Poor dear friends of the family! Poor dear Tabbies and Grimalkins! Poor dear everybody except the woman who is going to risk her life to create another life! Tavy: dont you be a selfish ass. Away with you and talk to Violet; and bring her down here if she cares to come. [*OCTAVIUS rises.*] Tell her we'll stand by her.

Ramsden. [*Rising.*] No, sir——

Tanner. [*Rising also and interrupting him.*] Oh, we understand: it's against your conscience; but still you'll do it.

Octavius. I assure you all, on my word, I never meant to be selfish. It's so hard to know what to do when one wishes earnestly to do right.

Tanner. My dear Tavy, your pious English habit of regarding the world as a moral

gymnasium built expressly to strengthen your character in, occasionally leads you to think about your own confounded principles when you should be thinking about other people's necessities. The need of the present hour is a happy mother and a healthy baby. Bend your energies on that; and you will see your way clearly enough.

[OCTAVIUS, much perplexed, goes out.]

Ramsden. [Facing TANNER impressively.] And morality, sir? What is to become of that?

Tanner. Meaning a weeping Magdalen and an innocent child branded with her shame. Not in our circle, thank you. Morality can go to its father the devil.

Ramsden. I thought so, sir. Morality sent to the devil to please our libertines, male and female. That is to be the future of England, is it?

Tanner. Oh, England will survive your disapproval. Meanwhile, I understand that you agree with me as to the practical course we are to take?

Ramsden. Not in your spirit, sir. Not for your reasons.

Tanner. You can explain that if anybody calls you to account, here or hereafter.

[He turns away and plants himself in front of Mr Herbert Spencer, at whom he stares gloomily.]

Ann. [Rising and coming to RAMSDEN.] Granny: hadn't you better go up to the drawing room and tell them what we intend to do?

Ramsden. [Looking pointedly at TANNER.] I hardly like to leave you alone with this gentleman. Will you not come with me?

Ann. Miss Ramsden would not like to speak about it before me, Granny. I ought not to be present.

Ramsden. You are right: I should have thought of that. You are a good girl, Annie.

[He pats her on the shoulder. She looks up at him with beaming eyes; and he goes out, much moved. Having disposed of him, she looks at TANNER. His back being turned to her, she gives a moment's attention to her personal appearance, then softly goes to him and speaks almost into his ear.]

Ann. Jack [He turns with a start.], are you glad that you are my guardian? You don't mind being made responsible for me, I hope.

Tanner. The latest edition to your collection of scapegoats, eh?

Ann. Oh, that stupid old joke of yours about me! Do please drop it. Why do you say things that you know must pain me? I

do my best to please you, Jack: I suppose I may tell you so now that you are my guardian. You will make me so unhappy if you refuse to be friends with me.

Tanner. [Studying her as gloomily as he studied the bust.] You need not go begging for my regard. How unreal our moral judgments are! You seem to me to have absolutely no conscience—only hypocrisy; and you can't see the difference—yet there is a sort of fascination about you. I always attend to you, somehow. I should miss you if I lost you.

Ann. [Tranquilly slipping her arm into his and walking about with him.] But isn't that only natural, Jack? We have known each other since we were children. Do you remember—

Tanner. [Abruptly breaking loose.] Stop! I remember everything.

Ann. Oh, I daresay we were often very silly; but—

Tanner. I won't have it, Ann. I am no more that schoolboy now than I am the dotard of ninety I shall grow into if I live long enough. It is over: let me forget it.

Ann. Wasn't it a happy time?

[She attempts to take his arm again.]

Tanner. Sit down and behave yourself. [He makes her sit down in the chair next the writing table.] No doubt it was a happy time for you. You were a good girl and never compromised yourself. And yet the wickedest child that ever was slapped could hardly have had a better time. I can understand the success with which you bullied the other girls: your virtue imposed on them. But tell me this: did you ever know a good boy?

Ann. Of course. All boys are foolish sometimes; but Tavy was always a really good boy.

Tanner. [Struck by this.] Yes: you're right. For some reason you never tempted Tavy.

Ann. Tempted! Jack!

Tanner. Yes, my dear Lady Mephistopheles, tempted. You were insatiably curious as to what a boy might be capable of, and diabolically clever at getting through his guard and surprising his inmost secrets.

Ann. What nonsense! All because you used to tell me long stories of the wicked things you had done—silly boy's tricks! And you call such things inmost secrets! Boy's secrets are just like men's; and you know what they are!

Tanner. [Obstinately.] No, I don't. What are they, pray?

Ann. Why, the things they tell everybody, of course.

Tanner. Now I swear I told you things I told no one else. You lured me into a compact by which we were to have no secrets from one another. We were to tell one another everything. I didnt notice that you never told me anything.

Ann. You didnt want to talk about me, Jack. You wanted to talk about yourself.

Tanner. Ah, true, horribly true. But what a devil of a child you must have been to know that weakness and to play on it for the satisfaction of your own curiosity! I wanted to brag to you, to make myself interesting. And I found myself doing all sorts of mischievous things simply to have something to tell you about. I fought with boys I didnt hate; I lied about things I might just as well have told the truth about; I stole things I didnt want; I kissed little girls I didnt care for. It was all bravado: passionless and therefore unreal.

Ann. I never told on you, Jack.

Tanner. No; but if you had wanted to stop me you would have told on me. You wanted me to go on.

Ann. [*Flashing out.*] Oh, thats not true: it's not true, Jack. I never wanted you to do those dull, disappointing, brutal, stupid, vulgar things. I always hoped that it would be something really heroic at last. [*Recovering herself.*] Excuse me, Jack; but the things you did were never a bit like the things I wanted you to do. They often gave me great uneasiness; but I could not tell on you and get you into trouble. And you were only a boy. I knew you would grow out of them. Perhaps I was wrong.

Tanner. [*Sardonically.*] Do not give way to remorse, Ann. At least nineteen twentieths of the exploits I confessed to you were pure lies. I soon noticed that you didnt like the true stories.

Ann. Of course I knew that some of the things couldnt have happened. But——

Tanner. You are going to remind me that some of the most disgraceful ones did.

Ann. [*Fondly, to his great terror.*] I dont want to remind you of anything. But I knew the people they happened to, and heard about them.

Tanner. Yes; but even the true stories were touched up for telling. A sensitive boy's humiliations may be very good fun for ordinary thickskinned grown-ups; but to the boy himself they are so acute, so ignominious, that he cannot confess them—cannot but deny them passionately. However, perhaps it was as well for me that I romanced a bit; for, on the one occasion when

I told you the truth, you threatened to tell on me.

Ann. Oh, never. Never once.

Tanner. Yes, you did. Do you remember a dark-eyed girl named Rachel Rosetree? [*ANN'S brows contract for an instant involuntarily.*] I got up a love affair with her; and we met one night in the garden and walked about very uncomfortably with our arms round one another, and kissed at parting, and were most conscientiously romantic. If that love affair had gone on, it would have bored me to death; but it didnt go on; for the next thing that happened was that Rachel cut me because she found out that I had told you. How did she find it out? From you. You went to her and held the guilty secret over her head, leading her a life of abject terror and humiliation by threatening to tell on her.

Ann. And a very good thing for her, too. It was my duty to stop her misconduct; and she is thankful to me for it now.

Tanner. Is she?

Ann. She ought to be, at all events.

Tanner. It was not your duty to stop my misconduct, I suppose.

Ann. I did stop it by stopping her.

Tanner. Are you sure of that? You stopped my telling you about my adventures; but how do you know that you stopped the adventures?

Ann. Do you mean to say that you went on in the same way with other girls?

Tanner. No. I had enough of that sort of romantic tomfoolery with Rachel.

Ann. [*Unconvinced.*] Then why did you break off our confidences and become quite strange to me?

Tanner. [*Enigmatically.*] It happened just then that I got something that I wanted to keep all to myself instead of sharing it with you.

Ann. I am sure I shouldnt have asked for any of it if you had grudged it.

Tanner. It wasnt a box of sweets, Ann. It was something youd never have let me call my own.

Ann. [*Incredulously.*] What?

Tanner. My soul.

Ann. Oh, do be sensible, Jack. You know youre talking nonsense.

Tanner. The most solemn earnest, Ann. You didnt notice at that time that you were getting a soul too. But you were. It was not for nothing that you suddenly found you had a moral duty to chastise and reform Rachel. Up to that time you had traded pretty extensively in being a good child; but

you had never set up a sense of duty to others. Well, I set one up too. Up to that time I had played the boy buccaneer with no more conscience than a fox in a poultry farm. But now I began to have scruples, to feel obligations, to find that veracity and honor were no longer goody-goody expressions in the mouths of grown-up people, but compelling principle in myself.

Ann. [*Quietly.*] Yes, I suppose youre right. You were beginning to be a man, and I to be a woman.

Tanner. Are you sure it was not that we were beginning to be something more? What does the beginning of manhood and womanhood mean in most people's mouths? You know: it means the beginning of love. But love began long before that for me. Love played its part in the earliest dreams and follies and romances I can remember—may I say the earliest follies and romances we can remember?—though we did not understand it at the time. No: the change that came to me was the birth in me of moral passion; and I declare that according to my experience moral passion is the only real passion.

Ann. All passions ought to be moral, Jack.

Tanner. Ought! Do you think that anything is strong enough to impose oughts on a passion except a stronger passion still?

Ann. Our moral sense controls passion, Jack. Dont be stupid.

Tanner. Our moral sense! And is that not a passion? Is the devil to have all the passions as well as all the good tunes? If it were not a passion—if it were not the mightiest of the passions, all the other passions would sweep it away like a leaf before a hurricane. It is the birth of that passion that turns a child into a man.

Ann. There are other passions, Jack. Very strong ones.

Tanner. All the other passions were in me before; but they were idle and aimless—mere childish greediness and cruelties, curiosities and fancies, habits and superstitions, grotesque and ridiculous to the mature intelligence. When they suddenly began to shine like newly lit flames it was by no light of their own, but by the radiance of the dawning moral passion. That passion dignified them, gave them conscience and meaning, found them a mob of appetites and organized them into an army of purposes and principles. My soul was born of that passion.

Ann. I noticed that you got more sense. You were a dreadfully destructive boy before that.

Tanner. Destructive! Stuff! I was only mischievous.

Ann. Oh, Jack, you were very destructive. You ruined all the young fir trees by chopping off their leaders with a wooden sword. You broke all the cucumber frames with your catapult. You set fire to the common: the police arrested Tavy for it because he ran away when he couldnt stop you. You—

Tanner. Pooh! pooh! pooh! these were battles, bombardments, stratagems to save our scalps from the red Indians. You have no imagination, Ann. I am ten times more destructive now than I was then. The moral passion has taken my destructiveness in hand and directed it to moral ends. I have become a reformer, and, like all reformers, an iconoclast. I no longer break cucumber frames and burn gorse bushes; I shatter creeds and demolish idols.

Ann. [*Bored.*] I am afraid I am too feminine to see any sense in destruction. Destruction can only destroy.

Tanner. Yes. That is why it is so useful. Construction cumbers the ground with institutions made by busybodies. Destruction clears it and gives us breathing space and liberty.

Ann. It's no use, Jack. No woman will agree with you there.

Tanner. Thats because you confuse construction and destruction with creation and murder. Theyre quite different: I adore creation and abhor murder. Yes: I adore it in tree and flower, in bird and beast, even in you. [*A flash of interest and delight suddenly chases the growing perplexity and boredom from her face.*] It was the creative instinct that led you to attach me to you by bonds that have left their mark on me to this day. Yes, Ann: the old childish compact between us was an unconscious love compact—

Ann. Jack!

Tanner. Oh, dont be alarmed—

Ann. I am not alarmed.

Tanner. [*Whimsically.*] Then you ought to be: where are your principles?

Ann. Jack: are you serious or are you not?

Tanner. Do you mean about the moral passion?

Ann. No, no: the other one. [*Confused.*] Oh! you are so silly: one never knows how to take you.

Tanner. You must take me quite seriously. I am your guardian; and it is my duty to improve your mind.

Ann. The love compact is over, then, is it? I suppose you grew tired of me?

Tanner. No; but the moral passion made our childish relations impossible. A jealous sense of my new individuality arose in me—

Ann. You hated to be treated as a boy any longer. Poor Jack!

Tanner. Yes, because to be treated as a boy was to be taken on the old footing. I had become a new person; and those who knew the old person laughed at me. The only man who behaved sensibly was my tailor: he took my measure anew every time he saw me, whilst all the rest went on with their old measurements and expected them to fit me.

Ann. You became frightfully self-conscious.

Tanner. When you go to heaven, Ann, you will be frightfully conscious of your wings for the first year or so. When you meet your relatives there, and they persist in treating you as if you were still a mortal, you will not be able to bear them. You will try to get into a circle which has never known you except as an angel.

Ann. So it was only your vanity that made you run away from us after all?

Tanner. Yes, only my vanity, as you call it.

Ann. You need not have kept away from me on that account.

Tanner. From you above all others. You fought harder than anybody against my emancipation.

Ann. [Earnestly.] Oh, how wrong you are! I would have done anything for you.

Tanner. Anything except let me get loose from you. Even then you had acquired by instinct that damnable woman's trick of heaping obligations on a man, of placing yourself so entirely and helplessly at his mercy that at last he dare not take a step without running to you for leave. I know a poor wretch whose one desire in life is to run away from his wife. She prevents him by threatening to throw herself in front of the engine of the train he leaves her in. That is what all women do. If we try to go where you do not want us to go there is no law to prevent us; but when we take the first step your breasts are under our foot as it descends: your bodies are under our wheels as we start. No woman shall ever enslave me in that way.

Ann. But, Jack, you cannot get through life without considering other people a little.

Tanner. Ay; but what other people? It is

this consideration of other people—or rather this cowardly fear of them which we call consideration—that makes us the sentimental slaves we are. To consider you, as you call it, is to substitute your will for my own. How if it be a baser will than mine? Are women taught better than men or worse? Worse, of course, in both cases. And then what sort of world are you going to get, with its public men considering its voting mobs, and its private men considering their wives? What does Church and State mean nowadays? The Woman and the Ratepayer.

Ann. [Placidly.] I am so glad you understand politics, Jack: it will be most useful to you if you go into parliament. [*He collapses like a pricked bladder.*] But I am sorry you thought my influence a bad one.

Tanner. I didn't say it was a bad one. But bad or good, I didn't choose to be cut to your measure. And I won't be cut to it.

Ann. Nobody wants you to, Jack. I assure you—really on my word—I don't mind your queer opinions one little bit. You know we have all been brought up to have advanced opinions. Why do you persist in thinking me so narrow minded?

Tanner. That's the danger of it. I know you don't mind, because you've found out that it doesn't matter. The boa constrictor doesn't mind the opinions of a stag one little bit when once she has got her coils round it.

Ann. [Rising in sudden enlightenment.] O-o-o-o-oh! now I understand why you warned Tavy that I am a boa constrictor. Granny told me. [*She laughs and throws her boa round his neck.*] Doesn't it feel nice and soft, Jack?

Tanner. [In the toils.] You scandalous woman, will you throw away even your hypocrisy?

Ann. I am never hypocritical with you, Jack. Are you angry? [*She withdraws the boa and throws it on a chair.*] Perhaps I shouldn't have done that.

Tanner. [Contemptuously.] Pooh, prudery! Why should you not, if it amuses you?

Ann. [Shyly.] Well, because—because I suppose what you really meant by the boa constrictor was this.

[*She puts her arms round his neck.*]

Tanner. [Staring at her.] Magnificent audacity! [*She laughs and pats his cheeks.*] Now just to think that if I mentioned this episode not a soul would believe me except the people who would cut me for telling, whilst if you accused me of it nobody would believe my denial!

Ann. [Taking her arms away with perfect

dignity.] You are incorrigible, Jack. But you should not jest about our affection for one another. Nobody could possibly misunderstand it. You do not misunderstand it, I hope.

Tanner. My blood interprets for me, Ann. Poor Ricky Ticky Tavy!

Ann. [*Looking quickly at him as if this were a new light.*] Surely you are not so absurd as to be jealous of Tavy.

Tanner. Jealous! Why should I be? But I dont wonder at your grip of him. I feel the coils tightening round my very self, though you are only playing with me.

Ann. Do you think I have designs on Tavy?

Tanner. I know you have.

Ann. [*Earnestly.*] Take care, Jack. You may make Tavy very unhappy if you mislead him about me.

Tanner. Never fear: he will not escape you.

Ann. I wonder are you really a clever man!

Tanner. Why this sudden misgiving on the subject?

Ann. You seem to understand all the things I dont understand; but you are a perfect baby in the things I do understand.

Tanner. I understand how Tavy feels for you, Ann: you may depend on that, at all events.

Ann. And you think you understand how I feel for Tavy, don't you?

Tanner. I know only too well what is going to happen to poor Tavy.

Ann. I should laugh at you, Jack, if it were not for poor papa's death. Mind! Tavy will be very unhappy.

Tanner. Yes; but he wont know it, poor devil. He is a thousand times too good for you. Thats why he is going to make the mistake of his life about you.

Ann. I think men make more mistakes by being too clever than by being too good.

[*She sits down, with a trace of contempt for the whole male sex in the elegant carriage of her shoulders.*]

Tanner. Oh, I know you dont care very much about Tavy. But there is always one who kisses and one who only allows the kiss. Tavy will kiss; and you will only turn the cheek. And you will throw him over if anybody better turns up.

Ann. [*Offended.*] You have no right to say such things, Jack. They are not true, and not delicate. If you and Tavy choose to be stupid about me, that is not my fault.

Tanner. [*Remorsefully.*] Forgive my bru-

talities, Ann. They are levelled at this wicked world, not at you. [*She looks up at him, pleased and forgiving. He becomes cautious at once.*] All the same, I wish Ramsden would come back. I never feel safe with you: there is a devilish charm—or no: not a charm, a subtle interest. [*She laughs.*] —Just so: you know it; and you triumph in it. Openly and shamelessly triumph in it!

Ann. What a shocking flirt you are, Jack!

Tanner. A flirt!! I!!!

Ann. Yes, a flirt. You are always abusing and offending people; but you never really mean to let go your hold of them.

Tanner. I will ring the bell. This conversation has already gone further than I intended.

[RAMSDEN and OCTAVIUS come back with MISS RAMSDEN, a hard-hearted old maiden lady in a plain brown silk gown, with enough rings, chains, and brooches to shew that her plainness of dress is a matter of principle, not of poverty. She comes into the room very determinedly: the two MEN, perplexed and downcast, following her. ANN rises and goes eagerly to meet her. TANNER retreats to the wall between the busts and pretends to study the pictures. RAMSDEN goes to his table as usual; and OCTAVIUS clings to the neighborhood of TANNER.]

Miss Ramsden. [*Almost pushing ANN aside as she comes to MRS WHITEFIELD'S chair and plants herself there resolutely.*] I wash my hands of the whole affair.

Octavius. [*Very wretched.*] I know you wish me to take Violet away, Miss Ramsden. I will. [*He turns irresolutely to the door.*]

Ramsden. No, no——

Miss Ramsden. What is the use of saying no, Roebuck? Octavius knows that I would not turn any truly contrite and repentant woman from your doors. But when a woman is not only wicked, but intends to go on being wicked, she and I part company.

Ann. Oh, Miss Ramsden, what do you mean? What has Violet said?

Ramsden. Violet is certainly very obstinate. She wont leave London. I dont understand her.

Miss Ramsden. I do. It's as plain as the nose on your face, Roebuck, that she wont go because she doesnt want to be separated from this man, whoever he is.

Ann. Oh, surely, surely! Octavius: did you speak to her?

Octavius. She wont tell us anything. She wont make any arrangement until she has consulted somebody. It cant be anybody else

than the scoundrel who has betrayed her.

Tanner. [To OCTAVIUS.] Well, let her consult him. He will be glad enough to have her sent abroad. Where is the difficulty?

Miss Ramsden. [Taking the answer out of OCTAVIUS's mouth.] The difficulty, Mr Jack, is that when I offered to help her I didn't offer to become her accomplice in her wickedness. She either pledges her word never to see that man again, or else she finds some new friends; and the sooner the better.

[The PARLORMAID appears at the door. ANN hastily resumes her seat, and looks as unconcerned as possible. OCTAVIUS instinctively imitates her.]

The Maid. The cab is at the door, maam.

Miss Ramsden. What cab?

The Maid. For Miss Robinson.

Miss Ramsden. Oh! [Recovering herself.]

All right. [The MAID withdraws.] She has sent for a cab.

Tanner. I wanted to send for that cab half an hour ago.

Miss Ramsden. I am glad she understands the position she has placed herself in.

Ramsden. I dont like her going away in this fashion, Susan. We had better not do anything harsh.

Octavius. No: thank you again and again; but Miss Ramsden is quite right. Violet cannot expect to stay.

Ann. Hadnt you better go with her, Tavy?

Octavius. She wont have me.

Miss Ramsden. Of course she wont. She's going straight to that man.

Tanner. As a natural result of her virtuous reception here.

Ramsden. [Much troubled.] There, Susan! You hear! and theres some truth in it. I wish you could reconcile it with your principles to be a little patient with this poor girl. She's very young; and theres a time for everything.

Miss Ramsden. Oh, she will get all the sympathy she wants from the men. I'm surprised at you, Roebuck.

Tanner. So am I, Ramsden, most favorably.

[VIOLET appears at the door. She is as impenitent and self-possessed a young lady as one would desire to see among the best behaved of her sex. Her small head and tiny resolute mouth and chin; her haughty crispness of speech and trimness of carriage; the ruthless elegance of her equipment, which includes a very smart hat with a dead bird in it, mark a personality which is as for-

midable as it is exquisitely pretty. She is not a siren, like ANN: admiration comes to her without any compulsion or even interest on her part; besides, there is some fun in ANN, but in this woman none, perhaps no mercy either: if anything restrains her, it is intelligence and pride, not compassion. Her voice might be the voice of a school-mistress addressing a class of girls who had disgraced themselves, as she proceeds with complete composure and some disgust to say what she has come to say.]

Violet. I have only looked in to tell Miss Ramsden that she will find her birthday present to me, the filagree bracelet, in the housekeeper's room.

Tanner. Do come in, Violet; and talk to us sensibly.

Violet. Thank you: I have had quite enough of the family conversation this morning. So has your mother, Ann: she has gone home crying. But at all events, I have found out what some of my pretended friends are worth. Goodbye.

Tanner. No, no: one moment. I have something to say which I beg you to hear. [She looks at him without the slightest curiosity, but waits, apparently as much to finish getting her glove on as to hear what he has to say.] I am altogether on your side in this matter. I congratulate you, with the sincerest respect, on having the courage to do what you have done. You are entirely in the right; and the family is entirely in the wrong.

[Sensation. ANN and MISS RAMSDEN rise and turn towards the two. VIOLET, more surprised than any of the others, forgets her glove, and comes forward into the middle of the room, both puzzled and displeased. OCTAVIUS alone does not move nor raise his head: he is overwhelmed with shame.]

Ann. [Pleading to TANNER to be sensible.] Jack!

Miss Ramsden. [Outraged.] Well, I must say!

Violet. [Sharply to TANNER.] Who told you?

Tanner. Why, Ramsden and Tavy of course. Why should they not?

Violet. But they dont know.

Tanner. Dont know what?

Violet. They dont know that I am in the right, I mean.

Tanner. Oh, they know it in their hearts, though they think themselves bound to

blame you by their silly superstitions about morality and propriety and so forth. But I know, and the whole world really knows, though it dare not say so, that you were right to follow your instinct; that vitality and bravery are the greatest qualities a woman can have, and motherhood her solemn initiation into womanhood; and that the fact of your not being legally married matters not one scrap either to your own worth or to our real regard for you.

Violet. [*Flushing with indignation.*] Oh! you think me a wicked woman, like the rest. You think I have not only been vile, but that I share your abominable opinions. Miss Ramsden: I have borne your hard words because I knew you would be sorry for them when you found out the truth. But I won't bear such a horrible insult as to be complimented by Jack on being one of the wretches of whom he approves. I have kept my marriage a secret for my husband's sake. But now I claim my right as a married woman not to be insulted.

Octavius. [*Raising his head with inexpressible relief.*] You are married!

Violet. Yes; and I think you might have guessed it. What business had you all to take it for granted that I had no right to wear my wedding ring? Not one of you even asked me: I cannot forget that.

Tanner. [*In ruins.*] I am utterly crushed. I meant well. I apologize—abjectly apologize.

Violet. I hope you will be more careful in future about the things you say. Of course one does not take them seriously; but they are very disagreeable, and rather in bad taste, I think.

Tanner. [*Bowing to the storm.*] I have no defence: I shall know better in future than to take any woman's part. We have all disgraced ourselves in your eyes, I am afraid, except Ann. She befriended you. For Ann's sake, forgive us.

Violet. Yes: Ann has been kind; but then Ann knew.

Tanner. [*With a desperate gesture.*] Oh!!! Unfathomable deceit! Double crossed!

Miss Ramsden. [*Stiffly.*] And who, pray, is the gentleman who does not acknowledge his wife?

Violet. [*Promptly.*] That is my business, Miss Ramsden, and not yours. I have my reasons for keeping my marriage a secret for the present.

Ramsden. All I can say is that we are extremely sorry, Violet. I am shocked to think of how we have treated you.

Octavius. [*Awkwardly.*] I beg your pardon, Violet. I can say no more.

Miss Ramsden. [*Still loth to surrender.*] Of course what you say puts a very different complexion on the matter. All the same, I owe it to myself—

Violet. [*Cutting her short.*] You owe me an apology, Miss Ramsden: that's what you owe both to yourself and to me. If you were a married woman you would not like sitting in the housekeeper's room and being treated like a naughty child by young girls and old ladies without any serious duties and responsibilities.

Tanner. Don't hit us when we're down, Violet. We seem to have made fools of ourselves; but really it was you who made fools of us.

Violet. It was no business of yours, Jack, in any case.

Tanner. No business of mine! Why, Ramsden as good as accused me of being the unknown gentleman.

[RAMSDEN makes a frantic demonstration; but VIOLET's cool keen anger extinguishes it.]

Violet. You! Oh, how infamous! how abominable! how disgracefully you have all been talking about me! If my husband knew it he would never let me speak to any of you again. [*To RAMSDEN.*] I think you might have spared me that, at least.

Ramsden. But I assure you I never—at least it is a monstrous perversion of something I said that—

Miss Ramsden. You needn't apologize, Roebuck. She brought it all on herself. It is for her to apologize for having deceived us.

Violet. I can make allowances for you, Miss Ramsden: you cannot understand how I feel on this subject, though I should have expected rather better taste from people of greater experience. However, I quite feel that you have placed yourselves in a very painful position; and the most truly considerate thing for me to do is to go at once. Good morning.

[*She goes, leaving them staring.*]

Miss Ramsden. Well, I must say!

Ramsden. [*Plaintively.*] I don't think she is quite fair to us.

Tanner. You must cower before the wedding ring like the rest of us, Ramsden. The cup of our ignominy is full.

ACT II

On the carriage drive in the park of a country house near Richmond an open touring car has broken down. It stands in front of a clump of trees round which the drive sweeps to the house, which is partly visible through them: indeed TANNER, standing in the drive with his back to us, could get an unobstructed view of the west corner of the house on his left were he not far too interested in a pair of supine legs in dungaree overalls which protrude from beneath the machine. He is watching them intently with bent back and hands supported on his knees. His leathern overcoat and peaked cap proclaim him one of the dismounted passengers.

The legs. Aha! I got him.

Tanner. All right now?

The legs. Aw rawt nah.

[TANNER stoops and takes the legs by the ankles, drawing their owner forth like a wheelbarrow, walking on his hands, with a hammer in his mouth. He is a young man in a neat suit of blue serge, clean shaven, dark eyed, square fingered, with short well brushed black hair and rather irregular sceptically turned eyebrows. When he is manipulating the car his movements are swift and sudden, yet attentive and deliberate. With TANNER and TANNER's friends his manner is not in the least deferential, but cool and reticent, keeping them quite effectually at a distance whilst giving them no excuse for complaining of him. Nevertheless he has a vigilant eye on them always, and that, too, rather cynically, like a man who knows the world well from its seamy side. He speaks slowly and with a touch of sarcasm; and as he does not at all affect the gentleman in his speech, it may be inferred that his smart appearance is a mark of respect to himself and his own class, not to that which employs him.]

He now gets into the car to stow away his tools and divest himself of his overalls. TANNER takes off his leathern overcoat and pitches it into the car with a sigh of relief, glad to be rid of it. The CHAUFFEUR, noting this, tosses his head contemptuously, and surveys his employer sardonically.]

The Chauffeur. Had enough of it, eh?

Tanner. I may as well walk to the house and stretch my legs and calm my nerves a little. *[Looking at his watch.]* I suppose you know that we have come from Hyde Park Corner to Richmond in twenty-one minutes.

The Chauffeur. I'd ha done it under fifteen if I'd had a clear road all the way.

Tanner. Why do you do it? Is it for love of sport or for the fun of terrifying your unfortunate employer?

The Chauffeur. What are you afraid of?

Tanner. The police, and breaking my neck.

The Chauffeur. Well, if you like easy going, you can take the bus, you know. It's cheaper. You pay me to save your time and give you the value of what you paid for the car. *[He sits down calmly.]*

Tanner. I am the slave of that car and of you too. I dream of the accursed thing at night.

The Chauffeur. You'll get over that all right. If you're going up to the house, may I ask how long you're going to stay? Because if you mean to put in the whole morning in there talking to the ladies, I'll put the car in the garage and make myself agreeable with a view to lunching here. If not, I'll keep the car on the go about here till you come.

Tanner. Better wait here. We shant be long. There's a young American gentleman, a Mr Malone, who is driving Mr Robinson down in his new American steam car.

The Chauffeur. *[Springing up and coming hastily out of the car to TANNER.]* American steam car! Wot! racin us dahn from London!

Tanner. Perhaps they're here already.

The Chauffeur. If I'd known it! *[With deep reproach.]* Why didnt you tell me, Mr Tanner?

Tanner. Because I've been told that this car is capable of 84 miles an hour; and I already know what you are capable of when there is a rival car on the road. No, Henry: there are things it is not good for you to know; and this was one of them. However, cheer up: we are going to have a day after your own heart. The American is to take Mr Robinson and his sister and Miss Whitefield. We are to take Miss Rhoda.

The Chauffeur. *[Consoled, and musing on another matter.]* That's Miss Whitefield's sister, isn't it?

Tanner. Yes.

The Chauffeur. And Miss Whitefield her-

self is goin in the other car? Not with you?

Tanner. Why the devil should she come with me? Mr Robinson will be in the other car. [*The CHAUFFEUR looks at TANNER with cool incredulity, and turns to the car, whistling a popular air softly to himself.* *TANNER, a little annoyed, is about to pursue the subject, when he hears the footsteps of OCTAVIUS on the gravel. OCTAVIUS is coming from the house, dressed for motoring, but without his overcoat.*] We've lost the race, thank Heaven: heres Mr Robinson. Well, Tavy, is the steam car a success?

Octavius. I think so. We came from Hyde Park Corner here in seventeen minutes. [*The CHAUFFEUR, furious, kicks the car with a groan of vexation.*] How long were you?

Tanner. Oh, about three quarters of an hour or so.

The Chauffeur. [*Remonstrating.*] Now, now, Mr Tanner, come now! We could ha done it easy under fifteen.

Tanner. By the way, let me introduce you. Mr Octavius Robinson: Mr Enry Straker.

Straker. Pleased to meet you, sir. Mr Tanner is gittin at you with is Enry Straker, you know. You call it Henery. But I dont mind, bless you!

Tanner. You think it's simply bad taste in me to chaff him, Tavy. But youre wrong. This man takes more trouble to drop his aitches than ever his father did to pick them up. It's a mark of caste to him. I have never met anybody more swollen with the pride of class than Enry is.

Straker. Easy, easy! A little moderation, Mr Tanner.

Tanner. A little moderation, Tavy, you observe. You would tell me to draw it mild. But this chap has been educated. Whats more, he knows that we havnt. What was that Board School of yours, Straker?

Straker. Sherbrooke Road.

Tanner. Sherbrooke Road! Would any of us say Rugby! Harrow! Eton! in that tone of intellectual snobbery? Sherbrooke Road is a place where boys learn something: Eton is a boy farm where we are sent because we are nuisances at home, and because in after life, whenever a Duke is mentioned, we can claim him as an old school-fellow.

Straker. You dont know nothing about it, Mr Tanner. It's not the Board School that does it: it's the Polytechnic.

Tanner. His university, Octavius. Not Oxford, Cambridge, Durham, Dublin, or Glasgow. Not even those Nonconformist holes in Wales. No, Tavy. Regent Street! Chelsea! the Borough!—I dont know half

their confounded names: these are his universities, not mere shops for selling class limitations like ours. You despise Oxford, Enry, dont you?

Straker. No, I dont. Very nice sort of place, Oxford, I should think, for people that like that sort of place. They teach you to be a gentleman there. In the Polytechnic they teach you to be an engineer or such like. See?

Tanner. Sarcasm, Tavy, sarcasm! Oh, if you could only see into Enry's soul, the depth of his contempt for a gentleman, the arrogance of his pride in being an engineer, would appal you. He positively likes the car to break down because it brings out my gentlemanly helplessness and his workmanlike skill and resource.

Straker. Never you mind him, Mr Robinson. He likes to talk. We know him, dont we?

Octavius. [*Earnestly.*] But theres a great truth at the bottom of what he says. I believe most intensely in the dignity of labor.

Straker. [*Unimpressed.*] Thats because you never done any, Mr Robinson. My business is to do away with labor. Youll get more out of me and a machine than you will out of twenty laborers, and not so much to drink either.

Tanner. For Heaven's sake, Tavy, dont start him on political economy. He knows all about it; and we dont. Youre only a poetic Socialist, Tavy: he's a scientific one.

Straker. [*Unperturbed.*] Yes. Well, this conversation is very improvin; but Ive got to look after the car; and you two want to talk about your ladies. I know.

[*He pretends to busy himself about the car, but presently saunters off to indulge in a cigaret.*]

Tanner. Thats a very momentous social phenomenon.

Octavius. What is?

Tanner. Straker is. Here have we literary and cultured persons been for years setting up a cry of the New Woman whenever some unusually old fashioned female came along, and never noticing the advent of the New Man. Straker's the New Man.

Octavius. I see nothing new about him, except your way of chaffing him. But I dont want to talk about him just now. I want to speak to you about Ann.

Tanner. Straker knew even that. He learnt it at the Polytechnic, probably. Well, what about Ann? Have you proposed to her?

Octavius. [*Self-reproachfully.*] I was brute enough to do so last night.

Tanner. Brute enough! What do you mean?

Octavius. [*Dithyrambically.*] Jack: we men are all coarse: we never understand how exquisite a woman's sensibilities are. How could I have done such a thing!

Tanner. Done what, you maudlin idiot?

Octavius. Yes, I am an idiot. Jack: if you had heard her voice! if you had seen her tears! I have lain awake all night thinking of them. If she had reproached me, I could have borne it better.

Tanner. Tears! thats dangerous. What did she say?

Octavius. She asked me how she could think of anything now but her dear father. She stifled a sob—— [*He breaks down.*]

Tanner. [*Patting him on the back.*] Bear it like a man, Tavy, even if you feel it like an ass. It's the old game: she's not tired of playing with you yet.

Octavius. [*Impatiently.*] Oh, dont be a fool, Jack. Do you suppose this eternal shallow cynicism of yours has any real bearing on a nature like hers?

Tanner. Hm! Did she say anything else?

Octavius. Yes; and that is why I expose myself and her to your ridicule by telling you what passed.

Tanner. [*Remorsefully.*] No, dear Tavy, not ridicule, on my honor! However, no matter. Go on.

Octavius. Her sense of duty is so devout, so perfect, so——

Tanner. Yes: I know. Go on.

Octavius. You see, under this new arrangement, you and Ramsden are her guardians; and she considers that all her duty to her father is now transferred to you. She said she thought I ought to have spoken to you both in the first instance. Of course she is right; but somehow it seems rather absurd that I am to come to you and formally ask to be received as a suitor for your ward's hand.

Tanner. I am glad that love has not totally extinguished your sense of humor, Tavy.

Octavius. That answer wont satisfy her.

Tanner. My official answer is, obviously, Bless you, my children: may you be happy!

Octavius. I wish you would stop playing the fool about this. If it is not serious to you, it is to me, and to her.

Tanner. You know very well that she is as free to choose as you are.

Octavius. She does not think so.

Tanner. Oh, doesnt she! just! However, say what you want me to do?

Octavius. I want you to tell her sincerely and earnestly what you think about me. I

want you to tell her that you can trust her to me—that is, if you feel you can.

Tanner. I have no doubt that I can trust her to you. What worries me is the idea of trusting you to her. Have you read Maeterlinck's book about the bee? ¹

Octavius. [*Keeping his temper with difficulty.*] I am not discussing literature at present.

Tanner. Be just a little patient with me. I am not discussing literature: the book about the bee is natural history. It's an awful lesson to mankind. You think that you are Ann's suitor; that you are the pursuer and she the pursued; that it is your part to woo, to persuade, to prevail, to overcome. Fool: it is you who are the pursued, the marked down quarry, the destined prey. You need not sit looking longingly at the bait through the wires of the trap: the door is open, and will remain so until it shuts behind you for ever.

Octavius. I wish I could believe that, vily as you put it.

Tanner. Why, man, what other work has she in life but to get a husband? It is a woman's business to get married as soon as possible, and a man's to keep unmarried as long as he can. You have your poems and your tragedies to work at: Ann has nothing.

Octavius. I cannot write without inspiration. And nobody can give me that except Ann.

Tanner. Well, hadnt you better get it from her at a safe distance? Petrarch didnt see half as much of Laura, nor Dante of Beatrice, as you see of Ann now; and yet they wrote first-rate poetry—at least so I'm told. They never exposed their idolatry to the test of domestic familiarity; and it lasted them to their graves. Marry Ann; and at the end of a week you'll find no more inspiration in her than in a plate of muffins.

Octavius. You think I shall tire of her!

Tanner. Not at all: you dont get tired of muffins. But you dont find inspiration in them; and you wont in her when she ceases to be a poet's dream and becomes a solid eleven stone wife. You'll be forced to dream about somebody else; and then there will be a row.

Octavius. This sort of talk is no use, Jack. You dont understand. You have never been in love.

Tanner. I! I have never been out of it. Why, I am in love even with Ann. But I am neither the slave of love nor its dupe. Go to the bee, thou poet: consider her ways and be

¹ *The Life of the Bee*, by Maurice Maeterlinck (1901).

wise.¹ By Heaven, Tavy, if women could do without our work, and we ate their children's bread instead of making it, they would kill us as the spider kills her mate or as the bees kill the drone. And they would be right if we were good for nothing but love.

Octavius. Ah, if we were only good enough for Love! There is nothing like Love: there is nothing else but Love: without it the world would be a dream of sordid horror.

Tanner. And this—this is the man who asks me to give him the hand of my ward! Tavy: I believe we were changed in our cradles, and that you are the real descendant of Don Juan.

Octavius. I beg you not to say anything like that to Ann.

Tanner. Dont be afraid. She has marked you for her own; and nothing will stop her now. You are doomed. [*STRAKER comes back with a newspaper.*] Here comes the New Man, demoralizing himself with a halfpenny paper as usual.

Straker. Now would you believe it, Mr Robinson, when we're out motoring we take in two papers: the *Times* for him, the *Leader* or the *Echo* for me. And do you think I ever see my paper? Not much. He grabs the *Leader* and leaves me to stodge myself with his *Times*.

Octavius. Are there no winners in the *Times*?

Tanner. Enry dont old with bettin, Tavy. Motor records are his weakness. Whats the latest?

Straker. Paris to Biskra at forty mile an hour average, not countin the Mediterranean.

Tanner. How many killed?

Straker. Two silly sheep. What does it matter? Sheep dont cost such a lot: they were glad to ave the price without the trouble o sellin em to the butcher. All the same, d'y'see, therell be a clamor agin it presently; and then the French Government'll stop it; an our chance'll be gone, see? Thats what makes me fairly mad: Mr Tanner wont do a good run while he can.

Tanner. Tavy: do you remember my Uncle James?

Octavius. Yes. Why?

Tanner. Uncle James had a first rate cook: he couldnt digest anything except what she cooked. Well, the poor man was shy and hated society. But his cook was proud of her skill, and wanted to serve up dinners to princes and ambassadors. To prevent her from leaving him, that poor old man had to give a big dinner twice a month, and suffer

agonies of awkwardness. Now here am I; and here is this chap Enry Straker, the New Man. I loathe travelling; but I rather like Enry. He cares for nothing but tearing along in a leather coat and goggles, with two inches of dust all over him, at sixty miles an hour and the risk of his life and mine. Except, of course, when he is lying on his back in the mud under the machine trying to find out where it has given way. Well, if I dont give him a thousand mile run at least once a fortnight I shall lose him. He will give me the sack and go to some American millionaire; and I shall have to put up with a nice respectful groom-gardener-amateur, who will touch his hat and know his place. I am Enry's slave, just as Uncle James was his cook's slave.

Straker. [*Exasperated.*] Garn! I wish I had a car that would go as fast as you can talk, Mr Tanner. What I say is that you lose money by a motor car unless you keep it workin. Might as well ave a pram and a nuss-maid to wheel you out in it as that car and me if you dont git the last inch out of us both.

Tanner. [*Soothingly.*] All right, Henry, all right. We'll go out for half an hour presently.

Straker. [*In disgust.*] Arf an ahr!

[*He returns to his machine; seats himself in it; and turns up a fresh page of his paper in search of more news.*]

Octavius. Oh, that reminds me. I have a note for you from Rhoda.

[*He gives TANNER a note.*]

Tanner. [*Opening it.*] I rather think Rhoda is heading for a row with Ann. As a rule there is only one person an English girl hates more than she hates her eldest sister; and thats her mother. But Rhoda positively prefers her mother to Ann. She—— [*Indignantly.*] Oh, I say!

Octavius. Whats the matter?

Tanner. Rhoda was to have come with me for a ride in the motor car. She says Ann has forbidden her to go out with me.

[*STRAKER suddenly begins whistling his favorite air with remarkable deliberation. Surprised by this burst of larklike melody, and jarred by a sardonic note in its cheerfulness, they turn and look inquiringly at him. But he is busy with his paper; and nothing comes of their movement.*]

Octavius. [*Recovering himself.*] Does she give any reason?

Tanner. Reason! An insult is not a reason. Ann forbids her to be alone with me on any occasion. Says I am not a fit person for

¹ Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise. *Proverbs*, VI, 6.

a young girl to be with. What do you think of your paragon now?

Octavius. You must remember that she has a very heavy responsibility now that her father is dead. Mrs Whitefield is too weak to control Rhoda.

Tanner. [*Staring at him.*] In short, you agree with Ann.

Octavius. No; but I think I understand her. You must admit that your views are hardly suited for the formation of a young girl's mind and character.

Tanner. I admit nothing of the sort. I admit that the formation of a young lady's mind and character usually consists in telling her lies; but I object to the particular lie that I am in the habit of abusing the confidence of girls.

Octavius. Ann doesn't say that, Jack.

Tanner. What else does she mean?

Straker. [*Catching sight of ANN coming from the house.*] Miss Whitefield, gentlemen.

[*He dismounts and strolls away down the avenue with the air of a man who knows he is no longer wanted.*]

Ann. [*Coming between OCTAVIUS and TANNER.*] Good morning, Jack. I have come to tell you that poor Rhoda has got one of her headaches and cannot go out with you today in the car. It is a cruel disappointment to her, poor child!

Tanner. What do you say now, Tavy?

Octavius. Surely you cannot misunderstand, Jack. Ann is shewing you the kindest consideration, even at the cost of deceiving you.

Ann. What do you mean?

Tanner. Would you like to cure Rhoda's headache, Ann?

Ann. Of course.

Tanner. Then tell her what you said just now; and add that you arrived about two minutes after I had received her letter and read it.

Ann. Rhoda has written to you!

Tanner. With full particulars.

Octavius. Never mind him, Ann. You were right—quite right. Ann was only doing her duty, Jack; and you know it. Doing it in the kindest way, too.

Ann. [*Going to OCTAVIUS.*] How kind you are, Tavy! How helpful! How well you understand!

[*OCTAVIUS beams.*]

Tanner. Ay: tighten the coils. You love her, Tavy, don't you?

Octavius. She knows I do.

Ann. Hush. For shame, Tavy!

Tanner. Oh, I give you leave. I am your

guardian; and I commit you to Tavy's care for the next hour. I am off for a turn in the car.

Ann. No, Jack. I must speak to you about Rhoda. Ricky: will you go back to the house and entertain your American friend. He's rather on Mamma's hands so early in the morning. She wants to finish her housekeeping.

Octavius. I fly, dearest Ann.

[*He kisses her hand.*]

Ann. [*Tenderly.*] Ricky Ticky Tavy!

[*He looks at her with an eloquent blush, and runs off.*]

Tanner. [*Bluntly.*] Now look here, Ann. This time you've landed yourself; and if Tavy were not in love with you past all salvation he'd have found out what an incorrigible liar you are.

Ann. You misunderstand, Jack. I didn't dare tell Tavy the truth.

Tanner. No: your daring is generally in the opposite direction. What the devil do you mean by telling Rhoda that I am too vicious to associate with her? How can I ever have any human or decent relations with her again, now that you have poisoned her mind in that abominable way?

Ann. I know you are incapable of behaving badly—

Tanner. Then why did you lie to her?

Ann. I had to.

Tanner. Had to!

Ann. Mother made me.

Tanner. [*His eye flashing.*] Ha! I might have known it. The mother! Always the mother!

Ann. It was that dreadful book of yours. You know how timid mother is. All timid women are conventional: We must be conventional, Jack, or we are so cruelly, so vilely misunderstood. Even you, who are a man, cannot say what you think without being misunderstood and vilified—yes: I admit it: I have had to vilify you. Do you want to have poor Rhoda misunderstood and vilified in the same way? Would it be right for mother to let her expose herself to such treatment before she is old enough to judge for herself?

Tanner. In short, the way to avoid misunderstanding is for everybody to lie and slander and insinuate and pretend as hard as they can. That is what obeying your mother comes to.

Ann. I love my mother, Jack.

Tanner. [*Working himself up into a sociological rage.*] Is that any reason why you are not to call your soul your own? Oh, I

protest against this vile abjection of youth to age! Look at fashionable society as you know it. What does it pretend to be? An exquisite dance of nymphs. What is it? A horrible procession of wretched girls, each in the claws of a cynical, cunning, avaricious, disillusioned, ignorantly experienced, foul-minded old woman whom she calls mother, and whose duty it is to corrupt her mind and sell her to the highest bidder. Why do these unhappy slaves marry anybody, however old and vile, sooner than not marry at all? Because marriage is their only means of escape from these decrepit fiends who hide their selfish ambitions, their jealous hatreds of the young rivals who have supplanted them, under the mask of maternal duty and family affection. Such things are abominable: the voice of nature proclaims for the daughter a father's care and for the son a mother's. The law for father and son and mother and daughter is not the law of love: it is the law of revolution, of emancipation, of final supersession of the old and worn-out by the young and capable. I tell you, the first duty of manhood and womanhood is a Declaration of Independence: the man who pleads his father's authority is no man: the woman who pleads her mother's authority is unfit to bear citizens to a free people.

Ann. [Watching him with quiet curiosity.] I suppose you will go in seriously for politics some day, Jack.

Tanner. [Heavily let down.] Eh? What? Wh—? [Collecting his scattered wits.] What has that got to do with what I have been saying?

Ann. You talk so well.

Tanner. Talk! Talk! It means nothing to you but talk. Well, go back to your mother, and help her to poison Rhoda's imagination as she has poisoned yours. It is the tame elephants who enjoy capturing the wild ones.

Ann. I am getting on. Yesterday I was a boa constrictor: today I am an elephant.

Tanner. Yes. So pack your trunk and be-gone: I have no more to say to you.

Ann. You are so utterly unreasonable and impracticable. What can I do?

Tanner. Do! Break your chains. Go your way according to your own conscience and not according to your mother's. Get your mind clean and vigorous; and learn to enjoy a fast ride in a motor car instead of seeing nothing in it but an excuse for a detestable intrigue. Come with me to Marseilles and across to Algiers and Biskra, at sixty miles an hour. Come right down to the Cape if

you like. That will be a Declaration of Independence with a vengeance. You can write a book about it afterwards. That will finish your mother and make a woman of you.

Ann. [Thoughtfully.] I dont think there would be any harm in that, Jack. You are my guardian: you stand in my father's place, by his own wish. Nobody could say a word against our travelling together. It would be delightful: thank you a thousand times, Jack. I'll come.

Tanner. [Aghast.] Youll come!!!

Ann. Of course.

Tanner. But— [He stops, utterly appalled; then resumes feebly.] No: look here, Ann: if theres no harm in it theres no point in doing it.

Ann. How absurd you are! You dont want to compromise me, do you?

Tanner. Yes: thats the whole sense of my proposal.

Ann. You are talking the greatest nonsense; and you know it. You would never do anything to hurt me.

Tanner. Well, if you dont want to be compromised, dont come.

Ann. [With simple earnestness.] Yes, I will come, Jack, since you wish it. You are my guardian; and I think we ought to see more of one another and come to know one another better. [Gratefully.] It's very thoughtful and very kind of you, Jack, to offer me this lovely holiday, especially after what I said about Rhoda. You really are good—much better than you think. When do we start?

Tanner. But—

[The conversation is interrupted by the arrival of MRS WHITEFIELD from the house. She is accompanied by the AMERICAN GENTLEMAN, and followed by RAMSDEN and OCTAVIUS.

HECTOR MALONE is an Eastern American; but he is not at all ashamed of his nationality. This makes English people of fashion think well of him, as a young fellow who is manly enough to confess to an obvious disadvantage without any attempt to conceal or extenuate it. They feel that he ought not to be made to suffer for what is clearly not his fault, and make a point of being specially kind to him. His chivalrous manners to women, and his elevated moral sentiments, being both gratuitous and unusual, strike them as perhaps a little unfortunate; and though they find his vein of easy humor rather amusing when it has ceased to puzzle them (as it does at first), they

have had to make him understand that he really must not tell anecdotes unless they are strictly personal and scandalous, and also that oratory is an accomplishment which belongs to a cruder stage of civilization than that in which his migration has landed him. On these points HECTOR is not quite convinced: he still thinks that the British are apt to make merits of their stupidities, and to represent their various incapacities as points of good breeding. English life seems to him to suffer from a lack of edifying rhetoric (which he calls moral tone); English behavior to shew a want of respect for womanhood; English pronunciation to fail very vulgarly in tackling such words as world, girl, bird, etc.; English society to be plain spoken to an extent which stretches occasionally to intolerable coarseness; and English intercourse to need enlivening by games and stories and other pastimes; so he does not feel called upon to acquire these defects after taking great pains to cultivate himself in a first rate manner before venturing across the Atlantic. To this culture he finds English people either totally indifferent, as they very commonly are to all culture, or else politely evasive, the truth being that HECTOR's culture is nothing but a state of saturation with our literary exports of thirty years ago, reimported by him to be unpacked at a moment's notice and hurled at the head of English literature, science, and art, at every conversational opportunity. The dismay set up by these sallies encourages him in his belief that he is helping to educate England. When he finds people chattering harmlessly about Anatole France and Nietzsche, he devastates them with Matthew Arnold, the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table, and even Macaulay; and as he is devoutly religious at bottom, he first leads the unwary, by humorous irreverence, to leave popular theology out of account in discussing moral questions with him, and then scatters them in confusion by demanding whether the carrying out of his ideals of conduct was not the manifest object of God Almighty in creating honest men and pure women. The engaging freshness of his personality and the dumbfounding staleness of his culture make it extremely difficult to decide whether he is worth knowing; for whilst his company is undeniably pleasant and enlivening, there is intellectually noth-

ing new to be got out of him, especially as he despises politics, and is careful not to talk commercial shop, in which department he is probably much in advance of his English capitalist friends. He gets on best with romantic Christians of the amoralistic sect: hence the friendship which has sprung up between him and OCTAVIUS.

In appearance HECTOR is a neatly built young man of twenty-four, with a short, smartly trimmed black beard, clear, well shaped eyes, and an ingratiating vivacity of expression. He is, from the fashionable point of view, faultlessly dressed. As he comes along the drive from the house with MRS WHITEFIELD he is sedulously making himself agreeable and entertaining, and thereby placing on her slender wit a burden it is unable to bear. An Englishman would let her alone, accepting boredom and indifference as their common lot; and the poor lady wants to be either let alone or let prattle about the things that interest her.]

[RAMSDEN strolls over to inspect the motor car. OCTAVIUS joins HECTOR.]

Ann. [Pouncing on her MOTHER joyously.] Oh, mamma, what do you think? Jack is going to take me to Nice in his motor car. Isn't it lovely? I am the happiest person in London.

Tanner. [Desperately.] Mrs Whitefield objects. I am sure she objects. Doesn't she, Ramsden?

Ramsden. I should think it very likely indeed.

Ann. You don't object, do you, mother?

Mrs Whitefield. I object! Why should I? I think it will do you good, Ann. [Trotting over to TANNER.] I meant to ask you to take Rhoda out for a run occasionally: she is too much in the house; but it will do when you come back.

Tanner. Abyss beneath abyss of perfidy!

Ann. [Hastily, to distract attention from this outburst.] Oh, I forgot; you have not met Mr Malone. Mr Tanner, my guardian: Mr Hector Malone.

Hector. Pleased to meet you, Mr Tanner. I should like to suggest an extension of the travelling party to Nice, if I may.

Ann. Oh, we're all coming. That's understood, isn't it?

Hector. I also am the mawdest possessor of a motor car. If Miss Rawbnsn will allow me the privilege of taking her, my car is at her service.

Octavius. Violet! [General constraint.]

Ann. [Subduedly.] Come, mother: we

must leave them to talk over the arrangements. I must see to my travelling kit.

[MRS WHITEFIELD looks bewildered; but ANN draws her discreetly away; and they disappear round the corner towards the house.]

Hector. I think I may go so far as to say that I can depend on Miss Rawbnsn's consent. [Continued embarrassment.]

Octavius. I'm afraid we must leave Violet behind. There are circumstances which make it impossible for her to come on such an expedition.

Hector. [Amused and not at all convinced.] Too American, eh? Must the young lady have a chaperone?

Octavius. It's not that, Malone—at least not altogether.

Hector. Indeed! May I ask what other objection applies?

Tanner. [Impatiently.] Oh, tell him, tell him. We shall never be able to keep the secret unless everybody knows what it is. Mr Malone: if you go to Nice with Violet, you go with another man's wife. She is married.

Hector. [Thunderstruck.] You dont tell me so!

Tanner. We do. In confidence.

Ramsden. [With an air of importance, lest MALONE should suspect a misalliance.] Her marriage has not yet been made known: she desires that it shall not be mentioned for the present.

Hector. I shall respect the lady's wishes. Would it be indiscreet to ask who her husband is, in case I should have an opportunity of cawnsulting him about this trip?

Tanner. We dont know who he is.

Hector. [Retiring into his shell in a very marked manner.] In that case, I have no more to say.

[They become more embarrassed than ever.]

Octavius. You must think this very strange.

Hector. A little singular. Pardn mee for saying so.

Ramsden. [Half apologetic, half huffy.] The young lady was married secretly; and her husband has forbidden her, it seems, to declare his name. It is only right to tell you, since you are interested in Miss—er—in Violet.

Octavius. [Sympathetically.] I hope this is not a disappointment to you.

Hector. [Softened, coming out of his shell again.] Well: it is a blow. I can hardly understand how a man can leave his wife in such a position. Surely it's not custoMary. It's not manly. It's not considerate.

Octavius. We feel that, as you may imagine, pretty deeply.

Ramsden. [Testily.] It is some young fool who has not enough experience to know what mystifications of this kind lead to.

Hector. [With strong symptoms of moral repugnance.] I hope so. A man need be very young and pretty foolish too to be excused for such conduct. You take a very lenient view, Mr Ramsden. Too lenient to my mind. Surely marriage should ennoble a man.

Tanner. [Sardonically.] Ha!

Hector. Am I to gather from that cachination that you dont agree with me, Mr Tanner?

Tanner. [Drily.] Get married and try. You may find it delightful for a while: you certainly wont find it ennobling. The greatest common measure of a man and a woman is not necessarily greater than the man's single measure.

Hector. Well, we think in America that a woman's morl number is higher than a man's, and that the purer nature of a woman lifts a man right out of himself, and makes him better than he was.

Octavius. [With conviction.] So it does.

Tanner. No wonder American women prefer to live in Europe! It's more comfortable than standing all their lives on an altar to be worshipped. Anyhow, Violet's husband has not been ennobled. So whats to be done?

Hector. [Shaking his head.] I cant dismiss that man's cawnduct as lightly as you do, Mr Tanner. However, I'll say no more. Whoever he is, he's Miss Rawbnsn's husband; and I should be glad for her sake to think better of him.

Octavius. [Touched; for he divines a secret sorrow.] I'm very sorry, Malone. Very sorry.

Hector. [Gratefully.] Youre a good fellow, Rawbnsn. Thank you.

Tanner. Talk about something else. Violet's coming from the house.

Hector. I should esteem it a very great favor, gentlemen, if you would take the opportunity to let me have a few words with the lady alone. I shall have to cry off this trip; and it's rather a dullicate—

Ramsden. [Glad to escape.] Say no more. Come, Tanner. Come, Tavy.

[He strolls away into the park with OCTAVIUS and TANNER, past the motor car. VIOLET comes down the avenue to

HECTOR.]

Violet. Are they looking?

Hector. No.

[She kisses him.]

Violet. Have you been telling lies for my sake?

Hector. Lying! Lying hardly describes it. I overdo it. I get carried away in an ecstasy of mendacity. *Violet:* I wish you'd let me own up.

Violet. [*Instantly becoming serious and resolute.*] No, no, *Hector:* you promised me not to.

Hector. I'll keep my pawmis until you release me from it. But I feel mean, lying to those men, and denying my wife. Just dastardly.

Violet. I wish your father were not so unreasonable.

Hector. He's not unreasonable. He's right from his point of view. He has a prejudice against the English middle class.

Violet. It's too ridiculous. You know how I dislike saying such things to you, *Hector;* but if I were to—oh, well, no matter.

Hector. I know. If you were to marry the son of an English manufacturer of awffice furniture, your friends would consider it a misalliance. And here's my silly old dad, who is the biggest awffice furniture man in the world, would shew me the door for marrying the most perfect lady in England merely because she has no handle to her name. Of course it's just absurd. But I tell you, *Violet,* I don't like deceiving him. I feel as if I was stealing his money. Why won't you let me own up?

Violet. We can't afford it. You can be as romantic as you please about love, *Hector;* but you mustn't be romantic about money.

Hector. [*Divided between his uxoriousness and his habitual elevation of moral sentiment.*] That's very English. [*Appealing to her impulsively.*] *Violet:* dad's bound to find us out someday.

Violet. Oh yes, later on of course. But don't let's go over this every time we meet, dear. You promised—

Hector. All right, all right, I—

Violet. [*Not to be silenced.*] It is I and not you who suffer by this concealment; and as to facing a struggle and poverty and all that sort of thing I simply will not do it. It's too silly.

Hector. You shall not. I'll sort of borrow the money from my dad until I get on my own feet; and then I can own up and pay up at the same time.

Violet. [*Alarmed and indignant.*] Do you mean to work? Do you want to spoil our marriage?

Hector. Well, I don't mean to let marriage spoil my character. Your friend Mr Tanner has got the laugh on me a bit already about that; and—

Violet. The beast! I hate Jack Tanner.

Hector. [*Magnanimously.*] Oh, he's all right: he only needs the love of a good woman to ennoble him. Besides, he's proposed a motoring trip to Nice; and I'm going to take you.

Violet. How jolly!

Hector. Yes; but how are we going to manage? You see, they've warned me off going with you, so to speak. They've told me in cawnfidnce that you're married. That's just the most overwhelming cawnfidnce I've ever been honored with.

[*TANNER returns with STRAKER, who goes to his car.*]

Tanner. Your car is a great success, Mr Malone. Your engineer is showing it off to Mr Ramsden.

Hector. [*Eagerly—forgetting himself.*] Let's come, Vi.

Violet. [*Coldly, warning him with her eyes.*] I beg your pardon, Mr Malone: I did not quite catch—

Hector. [*Recollecting himself.*] I ask to be allowed the pleasure of shewing you my little American steam car, Miss Rawbnsn.

Violet. I shall be very pleased.

[*They go off together down the avenue.*]

Tanner. About this trip, Straker.

Straker. [*Preoccupied with the car.*] Yes?

Tanner. Miss Whitefield is supposed to be coming with me.

Straker. So I gather.

Tanner. Mr Robinson is to be one of the party.

Straker. Yes.

Tanner. Well, if you can manage so as to be a good deal occupied with me, and leave Mr Robinson a good deal occupied with Miss Whitefield, he will be deeply grateful to you.

Straker. [*Looking round at him.*] Evidently.

Tanner. "Evidently"! Your grandfather would have simply winked.

Straker. My grandfather would have touched his at.

Tanner. And I should have given your good nice respectful grandfather a sovereign.

Straker. Five shillins, more likely. [*He leaves the car and approaches TANNER.*] What about the lady's views?

Tanner. She is just as willing to be left to Mr Robinson as Mr Robinson is to be left to her. [*STRAKER looks at his principal with cool scepticism; then turns to the car whistling his favorite air.*] Stop that aggravating noise. What do you mean by it? [*STRAKER calmly resumes the melody and finishes it. TANNER politely hears it out before he again addresses STRAKER, this time with elaborate seriousness.*] Enry: I have ever been a

warm advocate of the spread of music among the masses; but I object to your obliging the company whenever Miss Whitefield's name is mentioned. You did it this morning, too.

Straker. [*Obstinately.*] It's not a bit o use. Mr Robinson may as well give it up first as last.

Tanner. Why?

Straker. Garn! You know why. Course it's not my business; but you neednt start kiddin me about it.

Tanner. I am not kidding. I dont know why.

Straker. [*Cheerfully sulky.*] Oh, very well. All right. It aint my business.

Tanner. [*Impressively.*] I trust, Enry, that, as between employer and engineer, I shall always know how to keep my proper distance, and not intrude my private affairs on you. Even our business arrangements are subject to the approval of your Trade Union. But dont abuse your advantages. Let me remind you that Voltaire said that what was too silly to be said could be sung.

Straker. It wasnt Voltaire: it was Bow Mar Shay.

Tanner. I stand corrected: Beaumarchais of course. Now you seem to think that what is too delicate to be said can be whistled. Unfortunately your whistling, though melodious, is unintelligible. Come! theres nobody listening: neither my genteel relatives nor the secretary of your confounded Union. As man to man, Enry, why do you think that my friend has no chance with Miss Whitefield?

Straker. Cause she's arter summun else.

Tanner. Bosh! who else?

Straker. You.

Tanner. Me!!!

Straker. Mean to tell me you didnt know? Oh, come, Mr Tanner!

Tanner. [*In fierce earnest.*] Are you playing the fool, or do you mean it?

Straker. [*With a flash of temper.*] I'm not playin no fool. [*More coolly.*] Why, it's

as plain as the nose on your face. If you aint spotted that, you dont know much about these sort of things. [*Serene again.*] Ex-cuse me, you know, Mr Tanner; but you asked me as man to man; and I told you as man to man.

Tanner. [*Wildly appealing to the heavens.*] Then I—I am the bee, the spider, the marked down victim, the destined prey.

Straker. I dunno about the bee and the spider. But the marked down victim, thats what you are and no mistake; and a jolly good job for you, too, I should say.

Tanner. [*Momentously.*] Henry Straker: the golden moment of your life has arrived.

Straker. What d'y'mean?

Tanner. That record to Biskra.

Straker. [*Eagerly.*] Yes?

Tanner. Break it.

Straker. [*Rising to the height of his destiny.*] D'y'mean it?

Tanner. I do.

Straker. When?

Tanner. Now. Is that machine ready to start?

Straker. [*Quailing.*] But you cant——

Tanner. [*Cutting him short by getting into the car.*] Off we go. First to the bank for money; then to my rooms for my kit; then to your rooms for your kit; then break the record from London to Dover or Folkestone; then across the Channel and away like mad to Marseilles, Gibraltar, Genoa, any port from which we can sail to a Mahometan country where men are protected from women.

Straker. Garn! youre kiddin.

Tanner. [*Resolutely.*] Stay behind then. If you wont come I'll do it alone.

[*He starts the motor.*]

Straker. [*Running after him.*] Here! Mister! arf a mo! steady on!

[*He scrambles in as the car plunges forward.*]

ACT III

Evening in the Sierra Nevada. Rolling slopes of brown with olive trees instead of apple trees in the cultivated patches, and occasional prickly pears instead of gorse and bracken in the wilds. Higher up, tall stone peaks and precipices, all handsome and dignified. No wild nature here: rather a most aristocratic mountain landscape made by a fastidious artist-

creator. No vulgar profusion of vegetation: even a touch of aridity in the frequent patches of stones: Spanish magnificence and Spanish economy everywhere.

Not very far north of a spot at which the high road over one of the passes crosses a tunnel on the railway from Malaga to Granada, is one of the moun-

tain amphitheatres of the Sierra. Looking at it from the wide end of the horse-shoe, one sees, a little to the right, in the face of the cliff, a romantic cave which is really an abandoned quarry, and towards the left a little hill, commanding a view of the road, which skirts the amphitheatre on the left, maintaining its higher level on embankments and an occasional stone arch. On the hill, watching the road, is a MAN who is either a Spaniard or a Scotchman. Probably a Spaniard, since he wears the dress of a Spanish goatherd and seems at home in the Sierra Nevada, but very like a Scotchman for all that. In the hollow, on the slope leading to the quarry-cave, are about a DOZEN MEN who, as they recline at their ease round a heap of smouldering white ashes of dead leaf and brushwood, have an air of being conscious of themselves as picturesque scoundrels honoring the Sierra by using it as an effective pictorial background. As a matter of artistic fact they are not picturesque; and the mountains tolerate them as lions tolerate lice. An English policeman or Poor Law Guardian would recognize them as a selected band of tramps and ablebodied paupers. This description of them is not wholly contemptuous. Whoever has intelligently observed the tramp, or visited the ablebodied ward of a workhouse will admit that our social failures are not all drunkards and weaklings. Some of them are men who do not fit the class they were born into. Precisely the same qualities that make the educated gentleman an artist may make an uneducated manual laborer an ablebodied pauper. There are men who fall helplessly into the workhouse because they are good for nothing; but there are also men who are there because they are strongminded enough to disregard the social convention (obviously not a disinterested one on the part of the ratepayer) which bids a man live by heavy and badly paid drudgery when he has the alternative of walking into the workhouse, announcing himself as a destitute person, and legally compelling the Guardians to feed, clothe, and house him better than he could feed, clothe, and house himself without great exertion. When a man who is born a poet refuses a stool in a stockbroker's office, and starves in a garret, sponging on a poor landlady or on his friends and rela-

tives sooner than work against his grain; or when a lady, because she is a lady, will face any extremity of parasitic dependence rather than take a situation as cook or parlormaid, we make large allowances for them. To such allowances the ablebodied pauper and his nomadic variant the tramp are equally entitled.

Further, the imaginative man, if his life is to be tolerable to him, must have leisure to tell himself stories, and a position which lends itself to imaginative decoration. The ranks of unskilled labor offer no such positions. We misuse our laborers horribly; and when a man refuses to be misused, we have no right to say that he is refusing honest work. Let us be frank in this matter before we go on with our play; so that we may enjoy it without hypocrisy. If we were reasoning, far-sighted people, four fifths of us would go straight to the Guardians for relief, and knock the whole social system to pieces with most beneficial reconstructive results. The reason we do not do this is because we work like bees or ants, by instinct or habit, not reasoning about the matter at all. Therefore when a man comes along who can and does reason, and who, applying the Kantian test to his conduct, can truly say to us, If everybody did as I do, the world would be compelled to reform itself industrially, and abolish slavery and squalor, which exist only because everybody does as you do, let us honor that man and seriously consider the advisability of following his example. Such a man is the ablebodied, ableminded pauper. Were he a gentleman doing his best to get a pension or a sinecure instead of sweeping a crossing, nobody would blame him for deciding that so long as the alternative lies between living mainly at the expense of the community and allowing the community to live mainly at his, it would be folly to accept what is to him personally the greater of the two evils.

We may therefore contemplate the tramps of the Sierra without prejudice, admitting cheerfully that our objects—briefly, to be gentlemen of fortune—are much the same as theirs, and the difference in our position and methods merely accidental. One or two of them, perhaps, it would be wiser to kill without malice in a friendly and frank manner; for there are bipeds, just as there

are quadrupeds, who are too dangerous to be left unchained and unmuzzled; and these cannot fairly expect to have other men's lives wasted in the work of watching them. But as society has not the courage to kill them, and, when it catches them, simply wreaks on them some superstitious expiatory rites of torture and degradation, and then lets them loose with heightened qualifications for mischief, it is just as well that they are at large in the Sierra, and in the hands of a CHIEF who looks as if he might possibly, on provocation, order them to be shot.

This CHIEF, seated in the centre of the group on a squared block of stone from the quarry, is a tall strong man, with a striking cockatoo nose, glossy black hair, pointed beard, upturned moustache, and a Mephistophelean affectation which is fairly imposing, perhaps because the scenery admits of a larger swagger than Piccadilly, perhaps because of a certain sentimentality in the man which gives him that touch of grace which alone can excuse deliberate picturesqueness. His eyes and mouth are by no means rascally; he has a fine voice and a ready wit; and whether he is really the strongest man in the party or not, he looks it. He is certainly the best fed, the best dressed, and the best trained. The fact that he speaks English is not unexpected, in spite of the Spanish landscape; for with the exception of one man who might be guessed as a bullfighter ruined by drink, and one unmistakable Frenchman, they are all cockney or American; therefore, in a land of cloaks and sombreros, they mostly wear seedy overcoats, woollen mufflers, hard hemispherical hats, and dirty brown gloves. Only a very few dress after their leader, whose broad sombrero with a cock's feather in the band, and voluminous cloak descending to his high boots, are as un-English as possible. None of them are armed; and the ungloved ones keep their hands in their pockets because it is their national belief that it must be dangerously cold in the open air with the night coming on. (It is as warm an evening as any reasonable man could desire.)

Except the bullfighting inebriate there is only one person in the company who looks more than, say, thirty-three. He is a SMALL MAN with reddish whiskers, weak eyes, and the anxious look of a

small tradesman in difficulties. He wears the only tall hat visible: it shines in the sunset with the sticky glow of some sixpenny patent hat reviver, often applied and constantly tending to produce a worse state of the original surface than the ruin it was applied to remedy. He has a collar and cuffs of celluloid; and his brown Chesterfield overcoat, with velvet collar, is still presentable. He is preeminently the respectable man of the party, and is certainly over forty, possibly over fifty. He is the corner man on the leader's right, opposite THREE MEN in scarlet ties on his left. One of these three is the FRENCHMAN. Of the remaining TWO, who are both English, one is argumentative, solemn, and obstinate; the other rowdy and mischievous.

[The CHIEF, with a magnificent fling of the end of his cloak across his left shoulder, rises to address them. The applause which greets him shews that he is a favorite orator.]

The Chief. Friends and fellow brigands. I have a proposal to make to this meeting. We have now spent three evenings in discussing the question Have Anarchists or Social-Democrats the most personal courage? We have gone into the principles of Anarchism and Social-Democracy at great length. The cause of Anarchy has been ably represented by our one Anarchist, who doesn't know what Anarchism means. [Laughter.]

The Anarchist. [Rising.] A point of order, Mendoza—

Mendoza. [Forcibly.] No, by thunder: your last point of order took half an hour. Besides, Anarchists don't believe in order.

The Anarchist. [Mild, polite but persistent: he is, in fact, the respectable-looking elderly man in the celluloid collar and cuffs.] That is a vulgar error. I can prove—

Mendoza. Order, order.

The Others. [Shouting.] Order, order. Sit down. Chair! Shut up.

[The ANARCHIST is suppressed.]

Mendoza. On the other hand we have three Social-Democrats among us. They are not on speaking terms; and they have put before us three distinct and incompatible views of Social-Democracy.

The Three Men in Scarlet Ties. 1. Mr Chairman, I protest. A personal explanation. 2. It's a lie. I never said so. Be fair, Mendoza. 3. Je demande la parole. C'est ab-

solument faux.¹ C'est faux! faux!! faux!!!
Assas-s-s-s-sin!!!!!!

Mendoza. Order, order.

The Others. Order, order, order! Chair!

[*The SOCIAL-DEMOCRATS are suppressed.*]

Mendoza. Now, we tolerate all opinions here. But after all, comrades, the vast majority of us are neither Anarchists nor Socialists, but gentlemen and Christians.

The Majority. [*Shouting assent.*] Hear, hear! So we are. Right.

The Rowdy Social-Democrat. [*Smarting under suppression.*] You aint no Christian. Youre a Sheeny, you are.

Mendoza. [*With crushing magnanimity.*] My friend: I am an exception to all rules. It is true that I have the honor to be a Jew; and when the Zionists need a leader to reassemble our race on its historic soil of Palestine, Mendoza will not be the last to volunteer. [*Sympathetic applause—Hear, Hear, &c.*] But I am not a slave to any superstition. I have swallowed all the formulas, even that of Socialism; though, in a sense, once a Socialist, always a Socialist.

The Social-Democrats. Hear, hear!

Mendoza. But I am well aware that the ordinary man—even the ordinary brigand, who can scarcely be called an ordinary man [*Hear, hear!*]—is not a philosopher. Common sense is good enough for him; and in our business affairs common sense is good enough for me. Well, what is our business here in the Sierra Nevada, chosen by the Moors as the fairest spot in Spain? Is it to discuss abstruse questions of political economy? No: it is to hold up motor cars and secure a more equitable distribution of wealth.

The Sulky Social-Democrat. All made by labor, mind you.

Mendoza. [*Urbanely.*] Undoubtedly. All made by labor, and on its way to be squandered by wealthy vagabonds in the dens of vice that disfigure the sunny shores of the Mediterranean. We intercept that wealth. We restore it to circulation among the class that produced it and that chiefly needs it: the working class. We do this at the risk of our lives and liberties, by the exercise of the virtues of courage, endurance, foresight, and abstinence—especially abstinence. I myself have eaten nothing but prickly pears and broiled rabbit for three days.

The Sulky Social-Democrat. [*Stubbornly.*] No more aint we.

Mendoza. [*Indignantly.*] Have I taken more than my share?

The Sulky Social-Democrat. [*Unmoved.*] Why should you?

The Anarchist. Why should he not? To each according to his needs: from each according to his means.

The Frenchman. [*Shaking his fist at the ANARCHIST.*] Fumiste!¹

Mendoza. [*Diplomatically.*] I agree with both of you.

The Genuinely English Brigands. Hear, hear! Bravo, Mendoza!

Mendoza. What I say is, let us treat one another as gentlemen, and strive to excel in personal courage only when we take the field.

The Rowdy Social-Democrat. [*Derisively.*] Shikespear.

[*A whistle comes from the GOATHERD on the hill. He springs up and points excitedly forward along the road to the north.*]

The Goatherd. Automobile! Automobile!

[*He rushes down the hill and joins the rest, who all scramble to their feet.*]

Mendoza. [*In ringing tones.*] To arms! Who has the gun?

The Sulky Social-Democrat. [*Handing a rifle to MENDOZA.*] Here.

Mendoza. Have the nails been strewn in the road?

The Rowdy Social-Democrat. Two ahnces of em.

Mendoza. Good! [*To the FRENCHMAN.*] With me, Duval. If the nails fail, puncture their tires with a bullet.

[*He gives the rifle to DUVAL, who follows him up the hill. MENDOZA produces an opera glass. The others hurry across to the road and disappear to the north.*]

Mendoza. [*On the hill, using his glass.*] Two only, a capitalist and his chauffeur. They look English.

Duval. Angliche! Aoh yess. Cochons! [*Handling the rifle.*] Faut tirer, n'est-ce-pas?²

Mendoza. No: the nails have gone home. Their tire is down: they stop.

Duval. [*Shouting to the others.*] Fondez sur eux, nom de Dieu!³

Mendoza. [*Rebuking his excitement.*] Du calme, Duval: keep your hair on. They take it quietly. Let us descend and receive them.

[*MENDOZA descends, passing behind the*

¹ "Humbug!"

² Swine! Let's pull the trigger, eh?

³ Pounce on them, for God's sake!

¹ I want to speak. It's completely wrong.

fire and coming forward, whilst TANNER and STRAKER, in their motoring goggles, leather coats, and caps, are led in from the road by the BRIGANDS.]

Tanner. Is this the gentleman you describe as your boss? Does he speak English?

The Rowdy Social-Democrat. Course e daz. Y' dont suppowz we Hinglishmen luts ahrselfs be bossed by a bloomin Spenniard, do you?

Mendoza. [*With dignity.*] Allow me to introduce myself: Mendoza, President of the League of the Sierra! [*Posing loftily.*] I am a brigand: I live by robbing the rich.

Tanner. [*Promptly.*] I am a gentleman: I live by robbing the poor. Shake hands.

The English Social-Democrats. Hear, hear!

[*General laughter and good humor. TANNER and MENDOZA shake hands. The BRIGANDS drop into their former places.*]

Straker. Ere! where do I come in?

Tanner. [*Introducing.*] My friend and chauffeur.

The Sulky Social-Democrat. [*Suspiciously.*] Well, which is he? friend or show-foor? It makes all the difference, you know.

Mendoza. [*Explaining.*] We should expect ransom for a friend. A professional chauffeur is free of the mountains. He even takes a trifling percentage of his principal's ransom if he will honor us by accepting it.

Straker. I see. Just to encourage me to come this way again. Well, I'll think about it.

Duval. [*Impulsively rushing across to STRAKER.*] Mon frère!

[*He embraces him rapturously and kisses him on both cheeks.*]

Straker. [*Disgusted.*] Ere, git aht: dont be silly. Who are you, pray?

Duval. Duval: Social-Democrat.

Straker. Oh, youre a Social-Democrat, are you?

The Anarchist. He means that he has sold out to the parliamentary humbugs and the bourgeoisie. Compromise! that is his faith.

Duval. [*Furiously.*] I understand what he say. He say Bourgeois. He say Compromise. Jamais de la vie! Misérable menteur—¹

Straker. See here, Captain Mendoza, ah mach o this sort o thing do you put up with here? Are we avin a pleasure trip in the mountains, or are we at a Socialist meetin?

The Majority. Hear, hear! Shut up. Chuck it. Sit down, &c. &c.

[*The SOCIAL-DEMOCRATS and the ANARCHIST are hustled into the back-ground. STRAKER, after superintending this proceeding with satisfaction, places himself on MENDOZA's left, TANNER being on his right.*]

Mendoza. Can we offer you anything? Broiled rabbit and prickly pears—

Tanner. Thank you: we have dined.

Mendoza. [*To his followers.*] Gentlemen: business is over for the day. Go as you please until morning.

[*The BRIGANDS disperse into groups lazily. Some go into the cave. Others sit down or lie down to sleep in the open. A few produce a pack of cards and move off towards the road; for it is now star-light, and they know that motor cars have lamps which can be turned to account for lighting a card party.*]

Straker. [*Calling after them.*] Dont none of you go fooling with that car, d'ye hear?

Mendoza. No fear, Monsieur le Chauffeur. The first one we captured cured us of that.

Straker. [*Interested.*] What did it do?

Mendoza. It carried three brave comrades of ours, who did not know how to stop it, into Granada, and capsized them opposite the police station. Since then we never touch one without sending for the chauffeur. Shall we chat at our ease?

Tanner. By all means.

[*TANNER, MENDOZA, and STRAKER sit down on the turf by the fire. MENDOZA delicately waives his presidential dignity, of which the right to sit on the squared stone block is the appanage, by sitting on the ground like his guests, and using the stone only as a support for his back.*]

Mendoza. It is the custom in Spain always to put off business until tomorrow. In fact, you have arrived out of office hours. However, if you would prefer to settle the question of ransom at once, I am at your service.

Tanner. Tomorrow will do for me. I am rich enough to pay anything in reason.

Mendoza. [*Respectfully, much struck by this admission.*] You are a remarkable man, sir. Our guests usually describe themselves as miserably poor.

Tanner. Pooh! Miserably poor people dont own motor cars.

Mendoza. Precisely what we say to them.

Tanner. Treat us well: we shall not prove ungrateful.

Straker. No prickly pears and broiled rabbits, you know. Dont tell me you cant do us a bit better than that if you like.

¹ Never in my life! Miserable liar.

Mendoza. Wine, kids, milk, cheese, and bread can be procured for ready money.

Straker. [*Graciously.*] Now youre talkin.

Tanner. Are you all Socialists here, may I ask?

Mendoza. [*Repudiating this humiliating misconception.*] Oh no, no, no: nothing of the kind, I assure you. We naturally have modern views as to the injustice of the existing distribution of wealth: otherwise we should lose our self-respect. But nothing that you could take exception to, except two or three faddists.

Tanner. I had no intention of suggesting anything discreditable. In fact, I am a bit of a Socialist myself.

Straker. [*Drily.*] Most rich men are, I notice.

Mendoza. Quite so. It has reached us, I admit. It is in the air of the century.

Straker. Socialism must be lookin up a bit if your chaps are taking to it.

Mendoza. That is true, sir. A movement which is confined to philosophers and honest men can never exercise any real political influence: there are too few of them. Until a movement shews itself capable of spreading among brigands, it can never hope for a political majority.

Tanner. But are your brigands any less honest than ordinary citizens?

Mendoza. Sir: I will be frank with you. Brigandage is abnormal. Abnormal professions attract two classes: those who are not good enough for ordinary bourgeois life and those who are too good for it. We are dregs and scum, sir: the dregs very filthy, the scum very superior.

Straker. Take care! some o the dregs'll hear you.

Mendoza. It does not matter: each brigand thinks himself scum, and likes to hear the others called dregs.

Tanner. Come! you are a wit. [*MENDOZA inclines his head, flattered.*] May one ask you a blunt question?

Mendoza. As blunt as you please.

Tanner. How does it pay a man of your talent to shepherd such a flock as this on broiled rabbit and prickly pears? I have seen men less gifted, and I'll swear less honest, supping at the Savoy on foie gras and champagne.

Mendoza. Pooh! they have all had their turn at the broiled rabbit, just as I shall have my turn at the Savoy. Indeed, I have had a turn there already—as waiter.

Tanner. A waiter! You astonish me!

Mendoza. [*Reflectively.*] Yes: I, Mendoza of the Sierra, was a waiter. Hence, per-

haps, my cosmopolitanism. [*With sudden intensity.*] Shall I tell you the story of my life?

Straker. [*Apprehensively.*] If it aint too long, old chap—

Tanner. [*Interrupting him.*] Tsh-sh: you are a Philistine, Henry: you have no romance in you. [*To MENDOZA.*] You interest me extremely, President. Never mind Henry: he can go to sleep.

Mendoza. The woman I loved—

Straker. Oh, this is a love story, is it? Right you are. Go on: I was only afraid you were going to talk about yourself.

Mendoza. Myself! I have thrown myself away for her sake: that is why I am here. No matter: I count the world well lost for her. She had, I pledge you my word, the most magnificent head of hair I ever saw. She had humor; she had intellect; she could cook to perfection; and her highly strung temperament made her uncertain, incalculable, variable, capricious, cruel, in a word, enchanting.

Straker. A six shillin novel sort o woman, all but the cookin. Er name was Lady Gladys Plantagenet, wasnt it?

Mendoza. No, sir: she was not an earl's daughter. Photography, reproduced by the half-tone process, has made me familiar with the appearance of the daughters of the English peerage; and I can honestly say that I would have sold the lot, faces, dowries, clothes, titles, and all, for a smile from this woman. Yet she was a woman of the people, a worker: otherwise—let me reciprocate your bluntness—I should have scorned her.

Tanner. Very properly. And did she respond to your love?

Mendoza. Should I be here if she did? She objected to marrying a Jew.

Tanner. On religious grounds?

Mendoza. No: she was a freethinker. She said that every Jew considers in his heart that English people are dirty in their habits.

Tanner. [*Surprised.*] Dirty!

Mendoza. It shewed her extraordinary knowledge of the world; for it is undoubtedly true. Our elaborate sanitary code makes us unduly contemptuous of the Gentile.

Tanner. Did you ever hear that, Henry?

Straker. Ive heard my sister say so. She was cook in a Jewish family once.

Mendoza. I could not deny it; neither could I eradicate the impression it made on her mind. I could have got round any other objection; but no woman can stand a suspicion of indelicacy as to her person. My entreaties were in vain: she always retorted that she wasnt good enough for me, and

recommended me to marry an accursed barmaid named Rebecca Lazarus, whom I loathed. I talked of suicide: she offered me a packet of beetle poison to do it with. I hinted at murder; she went into hysterics; and as I am a living man I went to America so that she might sleep without dreaming that I was stealing upstairs to cut her throat. In America I went out west and fell in with a man who was wanted by the police for holding up trains. It was he who had the idea of holding up motor cars in the South of Europe: a welcome idea to a desperate and disappointed man. He gave me some valuable introductions to capitalists of the right sort. I formed a syndicate; and the present enterprise is the result. I became leader, as the Jew always becomes leader, by his brains and imagination. But with all my pride of race I would give everything I possess to be an Englishman. I am like a boy: I cut her name on the trees and her initials on the sod. When I am alone I lie down and tear my wretched hair and cry Louisa—

Straker. [*Startled.*] Louisa!

Mendoza. It is her name—Louisa—Louisa Straker—

Tanner. Straker!

Straker. [*Scrambling up on his knees most indignantly.*] Look here: Louisa Straker is my sister, see? Wot do you mean by gassin about her like this? Wotshe got to do with you?

Mendoza. A dramatic coincidence! You are Enry, her favorite brother!

Straker. Oo are you callin Enry? What call have you to take a liberty with my name or with hers? For two pins I'd punch your fat edd, so I would.

Mendoza. [*With grandiose calm.*] If I let you do it, will you promise to brag of it afterwards to her? She will be reminded of her Mendoza: that is all I desire.

Tanner. This is genuine devotion, Henry. You should respect it.

Straker. [*Fiercely.*] Funk, more likely.

Mendoza. [*Springing to his feet.*] Funk! Young man: I come of a famous family of fighters; and as your sister well knows, you would have as much chance against me as a perambulator against your motor car.

Straker. [*Secretly daunted, but rising from his knees with an air of reckless pug-nacity.*] I aint afraid of you. With your Louisa! Louisa! Miss Straker is good enough for you, I should think.

Mendoza. I wish you could persuade her to think so.

Straker. [*Exasperated.*] Here—

Tanner. [*Rising quickly and interposing.*] Oh come, Henry: even if you could fight the President you cant fight the whole League of the Sierra. Sit down again and be friendly. A cat may look at a king; and even a President of brigands may look at your sister. All this family pride is really very old fashioned.

Straker. [*Subdued, but grumbling.*] Let him look at her. But wot does he mean by making out that she ever looked at im? [*Reluctantly resuming his couch on the turf.*] Ear him talk, one ud think she was keepin company with him.

[*He turns his back on them and composes himself to sleep.*]

Mendoza. [*To TANNER, becoming more confidential as he finds himself virtually alone with a sympathetic listener in the still starlight of the mountains; for all the rest are asleep by this time.*] It was just so with her, sir. Her intellect reached forward into the twentieth century: her social prejudices and family affections reached back into the dark ages. Ah, sir, how the words of Shakespear seem to fit every crisis in our emotions!

I loved Louisa: 40,000 brothers

Could not with all their quantity of love

Make up my sum.¹

And so on. I forget the rest. Call it madness if you will—infatuation. I am an able man, a strong man: in ten years I should have owned a first-class hotel. I met her; and—you see!—I am a brigand, an outcast. Even Shakespear cannot do justice to what I feel for Louisa. Let me read you some lines that I have written about her myself. However slight their literary merit may be, they express what I feel better than any casual words can.

[*He produces a packet of hotel bills scrawled with manuscript, and kneels at the fire to decipher them, poking it with a stick to make it glow.*]

Tanner. [*Slapping him rudely on the shoulder.*] Put them in the fire, President.

Mendoza. [*Startled.*] Eh?

Tanner. You are sacrificing your career to a monomania.

Mendoza. I know it.

Tanner. No you dont. No man would commit such a crime against himself if he really knew what he was doing. How can you look round at these august hills, look up at this divine sky, taste this finely tempered air, and then talk like a literary hack on a second floor in Bloomsbury?

¹ See *Hamlet*, V. 1. 292-294.

Mendoza. [*Shaking his head.*] The Sierra is no better than Bloomsbury when once the novelty has worn off. Besides, these mountains make you dream of women—of women with magnificent hair.

Tanner. Of Louisa, in short. They will not make me dream of women, my friend: I am heartwhole.

Mendoza. Do not boast until morning, sir. This is a strange country for dreams.

Tanner. Well, we shall see. Goodnight. [*He lies down and composes himself to sleep.*]

[*MENDOZA, with a sigh, follows his example; and for a few moments there is peace in the Sierra. Then MENDOZA sits up suddenly and says pleadingly to TANNER.*]

Mendoza. Just allow me to read a few lines before you go to sleep. I should really like your opinion of them.

Tanner. [*Drowsily.*] Go on. I am listening.

Mendoza. I saw thee first in Whitsun week
Louisa, Louisa—

Tanner. [*Rousing himself.*] My dear President, Louisa is a very pretty name; but it really doesn't rhyme well to Whitsun week.

Mendoza. Of course not. Louisa is not the rhyme, but the refrain.

Tanner. [*Subsiding.*] Ah, the refrain. I beg your pardon. Go on.

Mendoza. Perhaps you do not care for that one: I think you will like this better.

[*He recites, in rich soft tones, and in slow time.*]

Louisa, I love thee.

I love thee, Louisa.

Louisa, Louisa, Louisa, I love thee.

One name and one phrase make my music,
Louisa.

Louisa, Louisa, Louisa, I love thee.

Mendoza thy lover,

Thy lover, *Mendoza*,

Mendoza adoringly lives for Louisa.

There's nothing but that in the world for
Mendoza.

Louisa, Louisa, *Mendoza* adores thee.

[*Affected.*] There is no merit in producing beautiful lines upon such a name. Louisa is an exquisite name, is it not? [*TANNER, all but asleep, responds with a faint groan.*]

O wert thou, Louisa,

The wife of *Mendoza*,

Mendoza's Louisa, Louisa *Mendoza*,

How blest were the life of Louisa's *Mendoza*!

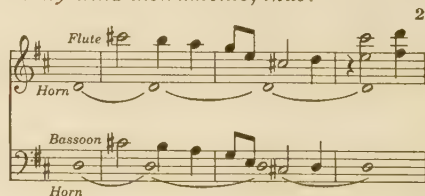
How painless his longing of love for Louisa!

That is real poetry—from the heart—from the heart of hearts. Don't you think it will move her? [*No answer. Resignedly.*] Asleep, as usual. Doggrel to all the world: heavenly music to me! Idiot that I am to wear my heart on my sleeve! [*He composes himself to sleep, murmuring.*] Louisa, I love thee; I love thee, Louisa; Louisa, Louisa, Louisa, I—

[*STRAKER snores; rolls over on his side; and relapses into sleep. Stillness settles on the Sierra; and the darkness deepens. The fire has again buried itself in white ash and ceased to glow. The peaks shew unfathomably dark against the starry firmament; but now the stars dim and vanish; and the sky seems to steal away out of the universe. Instead of the Sierra there is nothing: omnipresent nothing. No sky, no peaks, no light, no sound, no time nor space, utter void. Then somewhere the beginning of a pallor, and with it a faint throbbing buzz as of a ghostly violoncello palpitating on the same note endlessly. A couple of ghostly violins presently take advantage of this bass*



and therewith the pallor reveals a MAN in the void, an incorporeal but visible MAN, seated, absurdly enough, on nothing. For a moment he raises his head as the music passes him by. Then, with a heavy sigh, he drops in utter dejection; and the violins, discouraged, retrace their melody in despair and at last give it up, extinguished by wailings from uncanny wind instruments, thus:—



It is all very odd. One recognizes the Mozartian strain; and on this hint, and by the aid of certain sparkles of violet light in the pallor, the MAN's costume explains itself as that of a Spanish noble—

¹ From the overture to Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, measures 31–38.

² Measures 201–204 of the same overture.

man of the XV-XVI century. DON JUAN, of course; but where? why? how? Besides, in the brief lifting of his face, now hidden by his hat brim, there was a curious suggestion of TANNER. A more critical, fastidious, handsome face, paler and colder, without TANNER's impetuous credulity and enthusiasm, and without a touch of his modern plutocratic vulgarity, but still a resemblance, even an identity. The name too: DON JUAN TENORIO, JOHN TANNER. Where on earth—or elsewhere—have we got to from the XX century and the Sierra?

Another pallor in the void, this time not violet, but a disagreeable smoky yellow. With it, the whisper of a ghostly clarinet turning this tune into infinite sadness:



The yellowish pallor moves: there is an OLD CRONE wandering in the void, bent and toothless; draped, as well as one can guess, in the coarse brown frock of some religious order.² She wanders and wanders in her slow hopeless way, much as a wasp flies in its rapid busy way, until she blunders against the thing she seeks: companionship. With a sob of relief the poor old creature clutches at the presence of the MAN and addresses him in her dry unlovely voice, which can still express pride and resolution as well as suffering.]

The Old Woman. Excuse me; but I am so lonely; and this place is so awful.

Don Juan. A new comer?

The Old Woman. Yes: I suppose I died this morning. I confessed; I had extreme unction; I was in bed with my family about me and my eyes fixed on the cross. Then it grew dark; and when the light came back it was this light by which I walk seeing nothing. I have wandered for hours in horrible loneliness.

Don Juan. [Sighing.] Ah! you have not yet lost the sense of time. One soon does, in eternity.

The Old Woman. Where are we?

Don Juan. In hell.

The Old Woman. [Proudly.] Hell! I in hell! How dare you?

Don Juan. [Unimpressed.] Why not, Señora?

The Old Woman. You do not know to whom you are speaking. I am a lady, and a faithful daughter of the Church.

Don Juan. I do not doubt it.

The Old Woman. But how then can I be in hell? Purgatory, perhaps: I have not been perfect: who has? But hell! oh, you are lying.

Don Juan. Hell, Señora, I assure you; hell at its best: that is, its most solitary—though perhaps you would prefer company.

The Old Woman. But I have sincerely repented; I have confessed—

Don Juan. How much?

The Old Woman. More sins than I really committed. I loved confession.

Don Juan. Ah, that is perhaps as bad as confessing too little. At all events, Señora, whether by oversight or intention, you are certainly damned, like myself; and there is nothing for it now but to make the best of it.

The Old Woman. [Indignantly.] Oh! and I might have been so much wicked! All my good deeds wasted! It is unjust.

Don Juan. No: you were fully and clearly warned. For your bad deeds, vicarious atonement, mercy without justice. For your good deeds, justice without mercy. We have many good people here.

The Old Woman. Were you a good man?

Don Juan. I was a murderer.

The Old Woman. A murderer! Oh, how dare they send me to herd with murderers! I was not as bad as that: I was a good woman. There is some mistake: where can I have it set right?

Don Juan. I do not know whether mistakes can be corrected here. Probably they will not admit a mistake even if they have made one.

The Old Woman. But whom can I ask?

Don Juan. I should ask the Devil, Señora: he understands the ways of this place, which is more than I ever could.

The Old Woman. The Devil! I speak to the Devil!

Don Juan. In hell, Señora, the Devil is the leader of the best society.

The Old Woman. I tell you, wretch, I know I am not in hell.

Don Juan. How do you know?

The Old Woman. Because I feel no pain.

Don Juan. Oh, then there is no mistake: you are intentionally damned.

The Old Woman. Why do you say that?

¹ From Donna Anna's aria in Act II of *Don Giovanni*, "Non mi dir."

² The career given Ana after her marriage to Don Ottavio: twelve children, widowhood, membership in a religious order until her death, is not derived from any of the variations of the Don Juan legend cited in the *Epistle Dedicatory*. Apparently Shaw thought this a typical career of a seventeenth-century Spanish noblewoman.

Don Juan. Because hell, Señora, is a place for the wicked. The wicked are quite comfortable in it: it was made for them. You tell me you feel no pain. I conclude you are one of those for whom Hell exists.

The Old Woman. Do you feel no pain?

Don Juan. I am not one of the wicked, Señora; therefore it bores me, bores me beyond description, beyond belief.

The Old Woman. Not one of the wicked! You said you were a murderer.

Don Juan. Only a duel. I ran my sword through an old man who was trying to run his through me.

The Old Woman. If you were a gentleman, that was not a murder.

Don Juan. The old man called it murder, because he was, he said, defending his daughter's honor. By this he means that because I foolishly fell in love with her and told her so, she screamed; and he tried to assassinate me after calling me insulting names.

The Old Woman. You were like all men. Libertines and murderers all, all, all!

Don Juan. And yet we meet here, dear lady.

The Old Woman. Listen to me. My father was slain by just such a wretch as you, in just such a duel, for just such a cause. I screamed: it was my duty. My father drew on my assailant: his honor demanded it. He fell: that was the reward of honor. I am here: in hell, you tell me: that is the reward of duty. Is there justice in heaven?

Don Juan. No; but there is justice in hell: heaven is far above such idle human personalities. You will be welcome in hell, Señora. Hell is the home of honor, duty, justice, and the rest of the seven deadly virtues. All the wickedness on earth is done in their name: where else but in hell should they have their reward? Have I not told you that the truly damned are those who are happy in hell?

The Old Woman. And are you happy here?

Don Juan. [*Springing to his feet.*] No; and that is the enigma on which I ponder in darkness. Why am I here? I, who repudiated all duty, trampled honor underfoot, and laughed at justice!

The Old Woman. Oh, what do I care why you are here? Why am I here? I, who sacrificed all my inclinations to womanly virtue and propriety!

Don Juan. Patience, lady: you will be perfectly happy and at home here. As saith the poet, "Hell is a city much like Seville."¹

The Old Woman. Happy! here! where I am nothing! where I am nobody!

Don Juan. Not at all: you are a lady; and wherever ladies are is hell. Do not be surprised or terrified: you will find everything here that a lady can desire, including devils who will serve you from sheer love of servitude, and magnify your importance for the sake of dignifying their service—the best of servants.

The Old Woman. My servants will be devils!

Don Juan. Have you ever had servants who were not devils?

The Old Woman. Never: they were devils, perfect devils, all of them. But that is only a manner of speaking. I thought you meant that my servants here would be real devils.

Don Juan. No more real devils than you will be a real lady. Nothing is real here. That is the horror of damnation.

The Old Woman. Oh, this is all madness. This is worse than fire and the worm.

Don Juan. For you, perhaps, there are consolations. For instance: how old were you when you changed from time to eternity?

The Old Woman. Do not ask me how old I was—as if I were a thing of the past. I am 77.

Don Juan. A ripe age, Señora. But in hell old age is not tolerated. It is too real. Here we worship Love and Beauty. Our souls being entirely damned, we cultivate our hearts. As a lady of 77, you would not have a single acquaintance in hell.

The Old Woman. How can I help my age, man?

Don Juan. You forget that you have left your age behind you in the realm of time. You are no more 77 than you are 7 or 17 or 27.

The Old Woman. Nonsense!

Don Juan. Consider, Señora: was not this true even when you lived on earth? When you were 70, were you really older underneath your wrinkles and your grey hairs than when you were 30?

The Old Woman. No, younger: at 30 I was a fool. But of what use is it to feel younger and look older?

Don Juan. You see, Señora, the look was only an illusion. Your wrinkles lied, just as the plump smooth skin of many a stupid girl of 17, with heavy spirits and decrepit ideas, lies about her age! Well, here we have no bodies: we see each other as bodies only because we learnt to think about one another under that aspect when we were alive; and we still think in that way, knowing no other. But we can appear to one another at what

¹ "Hell is a city much like London."—Shelley.

age we choose. You have but to will any of your old looks back, and back they will come.

The Old Woman. It cannot be true.

Don Juan. Try.

The Old Woman. Seventeen!

Don Juan. Stop. Before you decide, I had better tell you that these things are a matter of fashion. Occasionally we have a rage for 17; but it does not last long. Just at present the fashionable age is 40—or say 37; but there are signs of a change. If you were at all good-looking at 27, I should suggest your trying that, and setting a new fashion.

The Old Woman. I do not believe a word you are saying. However, 27 be it.

[Whisk! the OLD WOMAN becomes a young one, magnificently attired, and so handsome that in the radiance into which her dull yellow halo has suddenly lightened one might almost mistake her for ANN WHITEFIELD.]

Don Juan. Doña Ana de Ulloa!

Ana. What? You know me!

Don Juan. And you forget me!

Ana. I cannot see your face. *[He raises his hat.]* Don Juan Tenorio! Monster! You who slew my father! Even here you pursue me.

Don Juan. I protest I do not pursue you. Allow me to withdraw. *[Going.]*

Ana. *[Seizing his arm.]* You shall not leave me alone in this dreadful place.

Don Juan. Provided my staying be not interpreted as pursuit.

Ana. *[Releasing him.]* You may well wonder how I can endure your presence. My dear, dear father!

Don Juan. Would you like to see him?

Ana. My father here!!!

Don Juan. No; he is in heaven.

Ana. I knew it. My noble father! He is looking down on us now. What must he feel to see his daughter in this place, and in conversation with his murderer!

Don Juan. By the way, if we should meet him——

Ana. How can we meet him? He is in heaven.

Don Juan. He condescends to look in upon us here from time to time. Heaven bores him. So let me warn you that if you meet him he will be mortally offended if you speak of me as his murderer! He maintains that he was a much better swordsman than I, and that if his foot had not slipped he would have killed me. No doubt he is right; I was not a good fencer. I never dispute the point; so we are excellent friends.

Ana. It is no dishonor to a soldier to be proud of his skill in arms.

Don Juan. You would rather not meet him, probably.

Ana. How dare you say that?

Don Juan. Oh, that is the usual feeling here. You may remember that on earth—though of course we never confessed it—the death of anyone we knew, even those we liked best, was always mingled with a certain satisfaction at being finally done with them.

Ana. Monster! Never, never.

Don Juan. *[Placidly.]* I see you recognize the feeling. Yes: a funeral was always a festivity in black, especially the funeral of a relative. At all events, family ties are rarely kept up here. Your father is quite accustomed to this: he will not expect any devotion from you.

Ana. Wretch: I wore mourning for him all my life.

Don Juan. Yes: it became you. But a life of mourning is one thing: an eternity of it quite another. Besides, here you are as dead as he. Can anything be more ridiculous than one dead person mourning for another? Do not look shocked, my dear Ana; and do not be alarmed: there is plenty of humbug in hell (indeed there is hardly anything else); but the humbug of death and age and change is dropped because here we are all dead and all eternal. You will pick up our ways soon.

Ana. And will all the men call me their dear Ana?

Don Juan. No. That was a slip of the tongue. I beg your pardon.

Ana. *[Almost tenderly.]* Juan: did you really love me when you behaved so disgracefully to me?

Don Juan. *[Impatiently.]* Oh, I beg you not to begin talking about love. Here they talk of nothing else but love: its beauty, its holiness, its spirituality, its devil knows what—excuse me; but it does so bore me. They don't know what they're talking about: I do. They think they have achieved the perfection of love because they have no bodies. Sheer imaginative debauchery! Faugh!

Ana. Has even death failed to refine your soul, Juan? Has the terrible judgment of which my father's statue was the minister taught you no reverence?

Don Juan. How is that very flattering statue, by the way? Does it still come to supper with naughty people and cast them into this bottomless pit?

Ana. It has been a great expense to me. The boys in the monastery school would not let it alone: the mischievous ones broke it; and the studious ones wrote their names on it. Three new noses in two years, and fingers

without end. I had to leave it to its fate at last; and now I fear it is shockingly mutilated. My poor father!

Don Juan. Listen! [*Two great chords rolling on syncopated waves of sound break forth. D minor and its dominant: a sound of dreadful joy to all musicians.*] Ha! Mozart's statue music. It is your father. You had better disappear until I prepare him.

[*She vanishes. From the void comes a living STATUE of white marble, designed to represent a majestic old man. But he waives his majesty with infinite grace; walks with a feather-like step; and makes every wrinkle in his war worn visage brim over with holiday joyousness. To his sculptor he owes a perfectly trained figure, which he carries erect and trim; and the ends of his moustache curl up, elastic as watchsprings, giving him an air which, but for its Spanish dignity, would be called jaunty. He is on the pleasantest terms with DON JUAN. His voice, save for a much more distinguished intonation, is so like the voice of ROEBUCK RAMSDEN that it calls attention to the fact that they are not unlike one another in spite of their very different fashions of shaving.*]

Don Juan. Ah, here you are, my friend. Why dont you learn to sing the splendid music Mozart has written for you?

The Statue. Unluckily he has written it for a bass voice. Mine is a countertenor. Well: have you repented yet?

Don Juan. I have too much consideration for you to repent, Don Gonzalo. If I did, you would have no excuse for coming from heaven to argue with me.

The Statue. True. Remain obdurate, my boy. I wish I had killed you, as I should have done but for an accident. Then I should have come here; and you would have had a statue and a reputation for piety to live up to. Any news?

Don Juan. Yes: your daughter is dead.

The Statue. [*Puzzled.*] My daughter? [*Recollecting.*] Oh! the one you were taken with. Let me see: what was her name?

Don Juan. Ana.

The Statue. To be sure: Ana. A good-looking girl, if I recollect aright. Have you warned Whatshisname, her husband?

Don Juan. My friend Ottavio? No: I have not seen him since Ana arrived.

[*ANA comes indignantly to light.*]

Ana. What does this mean? Ottavio here and your friend! And you, father, have forgotten my name. You are indeed turned to stone.

The Statue. My dear: I am so much more admired in marble than I ever was in my own person that I have retained the shape the sculptor gave me. He was one of the first men of his day: you must acknowledge that.

Ana. Father! Vanity! personal vanity! from you!

The Statue. Ah, you outlived that weakness, my daughter: you must be nearly 80 by this time. I was cut off (by an accident) in my 64th year, and am considerably your junior in consequence. Besides, my child, in this place, what our libertine friend here would call the farce of parental wisdom is dropped. Regard me, I beg, as a fellow creature, not as a father.

Ana. You speak as this villain speaks.

The Statue. Juan is a sound thinker, Ana. A bad fencer, but a sound thinker.

Ana. [*Horror creeping upon her.*] I begin to understand. These are devils, mocking me. I had better pray.

The Statue. [*Consoling her.*] No, no, no, my child: do not pray. If you do, you will throw away the main advantage of this place. Written over the gate here are the words "Leave every hope behind, ye who enter." Only think what a relief that is! For what is hope? A form of moral responsibility. Here there is no hope, and consequently no duty, no work, nothing to be gained by praying, nothing to be lost by doing what you like. Hell, in short, is a place where you have nothing to do but amuse yourself. [*DON JUAN sighs deeply.*] You sigh, friend Juan; but if you dwell in heaven, as I do, you would realize your advantages.

Don Juan. You are in good spirits today, Commander. You are positively brilliant. What is the matter?

The Statue. I have come to a momentous decision, my boy. But first, where is our friend the Devil? I must consult him in the matter. And Ana would like to make his acquaintance, no doubt.

Ana. You are preparing some torment for me.

Don Juan. All that is superstition, Ana. Reassure yourself. Remember: the devil is not so black as he is painted.

The Statue. Let us give him a call.

[*At the wave of THE STATUE'S hand the great chords roll out again; but this time Mozart's music gets grotesquely adulterated with Gounod's. A scarlet halo begins to glow; and into it THE DEVIL rises, very Mephistophelean, and not at all unlike MENDOZA, though not so interesting. He looks older; is getting prematurely bald; and, in spite of an*

effusion of good-nature and friendliness, is peevish and sensitive when his advances are not reciprocated. He does not inspire much confidence in his powers of hard work or endurance, and is, on the whole, a disagreeably self-indulgent looking person; but he is clever and plausible, though perceptibly less well bred than the Two OTHER MEN, and enormously less vital than the WOMAN.]

The Devil. [Heartily.] Have I the pleasure of again receiving a visit from the illustrious Commander of Calatrava? [Coldly.] Don Juan, your servant. [Politely.] And a strange lady? My respects, Señora.

Ana. Are you—

The Devil. [Bowling.] Lucifer, at your service.

Ana. I shall go mad.

The Devil. [Gallantly.] Ah, Señora, do not be anxious. You come to us from earth, full of the prejudices and terrors of that priest-ridden place. You have heard me ill spoken of; and yet, believe me, I have hosts of friends there.

Ana. Yes: you reign in their hearts.

The Devil. [Shaking his head.] You flatter me, Señora; but you are mistaken. It is true that the world cannot get on without me; but it never gives me credit for that: in its heart it mistrusts and hates me. Its sympathies are all with misery, with poverty, with starvation of the body, and of the heart. I call on it to sympathize with joy, with love, with happiness, with beauty—

Don Juan. [Nauseated.] Excuse me: I am going. You know I cannot stand this.

The Devil. [Angrily.] Yes: I know that you are no friend of mine.

The Statue. What harm is he doing you, Juan? It seems to me that he was talking excellent sense when you interrupted him.

The Devil. [Warmly patting THE STATUE'S hand.] Thank you, my friend: thank you. You have always understood me: he has always disparaged and avoided me.

Don Juan. I have treated you with perfect courtesy.

The Devil. Courtesy! What is courtesy? I care nothing for mere courtesy. Give me warmth of heart, true sincerity, the bond of sympathy with love and joy—

Don Juan. You are making me ill.

The Devil. There! [Appealing to THE STATUE.] You hear, sir! Oh, by what irony of fate was this cold selfish egotist sent to my kingdom, and you taken to the icy mansions of the sky?

The Statue. I can't complain. I was a

hypocrite; and it served me right to be sent to heaven.

The Devil. Why, sir, do you not join us, and leave a sphere for which your temperament is too sympathetic, your heart too warm, your capacity for enjoyment too generous?

The Statue. I have this day resolved to do so. In future, excellent Son of the Morning, I am yours. I have left heaven for ever.

The Devil. [Again touching the marble hand.] Ah, what an honor! what a triumph for our cause! Thank you, thank you. And now, my friend—I may call you so at last—could you not persuade him to take the place you have left vacant above?

The Statue. [Shaking his head.] I cannot conscientiously recommend anybody with whom I am on friendly terms to deliberately make himself dull and uncomfortable.

The Devil. Of course not; but are you sure he would be uncomfortable? Of course you know best: you brought him here originally; and we had the greatest hopes of him. His sentiments were in the best taste of our best people. You remember how he sang?

[He begins to sing in a nasal operatic baritone, tremulous from an eternity of misuse in the French manner.]

Vivan le femmine!

Viva il buon vino!

The Statue. [Taking up the tune an octave higher in his countertenor.]

Sostegno e gloria

D'umanità.¹

The Devil. Precisely. Well, he never sings for us now.

Don Juan. Do you complain of that? Hell is full of musical amateurs: music is the brandy of the damned. May not one lost soul be permitted to abstain?

The Devil. You dare blaspheme against the sublimity of the arts!

Don Juan. [With cold disgust.] You talk like a hysterical woman fawning on a fiddler.

The Devil. I am not angry. I merely pity you. You have no soul; and you are unconscious of all that you lose. Now you, Señor Commander, are a born musician. How well you sing! Mozart would be delighted if he were still here; but he moped and went to heaven. Curious how these clever men, whom you would have supposed born to be

¹ "Long live women!

Long live wine,

Prop and glory

Of humanity."

Sung by Don Giovanni late in Act II, just before the Statue knocks at his door.

popular here, have turned out social failures, like Don Juan!

Don Juan. I am really very sorry to be a social failure.

The Devil. Not that we dont admire your intellect, you know. We do. But I look at the matter from your own point of view. You dont get on with us. The place doesnt suit you. The truth is, you have—I wont say no heart; for we know that beneath all your affected cynicism you have a warm one—

Don Juan. [*Shrinking.*] Dont, please dont.

The Devil. [*Nettled.*] Well, youve no capacity for enjoyment. Will that satisfy you?

Don Juan. It is a somewhat less insufferable form of cant than the other. But if youll allow me, I'll take refuge, as usual, in solitude.

The Devil. Why not take refuge in heaven? Thats the proper place for you. [*To ANA.*] Come, Señora! could you not persuade him for his own good to try change of air?

Ana. But can he go to heaven if he wants to?

The Devil. Whats to prevent him?

Ana. Can anybody—can I go to heaven if I want to?

The Devil. [*Rather contemptuously.*] Certainly, if your taste lies that way.

Ana. But why doesnt everybody go to heaven, then?

The Statue. [*Chuckling.*] I can tell you that, my dear. It's because heaven is the most angelically dull place in all creation: thats why.

The Devil. His excellency the Commander puts it with military bluntness; but the strain of living in heaven is intolerable. There is a notion that I was turned out of it; but as a matter of fact nothing could have induced me to stay there. I simply left it and organized this place.

The Statue. I dont wonder at it. Nobody could stand an eternity of heaven.

The Devil. Oh, it suits some people. Let us be just, Commander: it is a question of temperament. I dont admire the heavenly temperament: I dont understand it: I dont know that I particularly want to understand it; but it takes all sorts to make a universe. There is no accounting for tastes; there are people who like it. I think Don Juan would like it.

Don Juan. But—pardon my frankness—could you really go back there if you desired to; or are the grapes sour?

The Devil. Back there! I often go back there. Have you never read the book of Job?

Have you any canonical authority for assuming that there is any barrier between our circle and the other one?

Ana. But surely there is a great gulf fixed.

The Devil. Dear lady: a parable must not be taken literally. The gulf is the difference between the angelic and the diabolic temperament. What more impassable gulf could you have? Think of what you have seen on earth. There is no physical gulf between the philosopher's class room and the bull ring; but the bull fighters do not come to the class room for all that. Have you ever been in the country where I have the largest following, England? There they have great racecourses, and also concert rooms where they play the classical compositions of his Excellency's friend Mozart. Those who go to the racecourses can stay away from them and go to the classical concerts instead if they like: there is no law against it; for Englishmen never will be slaves: they are free to do whatever the Government and public opinion allow them to do. And the classical concert is admitted to be a higher, more cultivated, poetic, intellectual, ennobling place than the racecourse. But do the lovers of racing desert their sport and flock to the concert room? Not they. They would suffer there all the weariness the Commander has suffered in heaven. This is the great gulf of the parable between the two places. A mere physical gulf they could bridge; or at least I could bridge it for them (the earth is full of Devil's Bridges); but the gulf of dislike is impassable and eternal. And that is the only gulf that separates my friends here from those who are invidiously called the blest.

Ana. I shall go to heaven at once.

The Statue. My child: one word of warning first. Let me complete my friend Lucifer's similitude of the classical concert. At every one of these concerts in England you will find rows of weary people who are there, not because they really like classical music, but because they think they ought to like it. Well, there is the same thing in heaven. A number of people sit there in glory, not because they are happy, but because they think they owe it to their position to be in heaven. They are almost all English.

The Devil. Yes, the Southerners give it up and join me just as you have done. But the English really do not seem to know when they are thoroughly miserable. An Englishman thinks he is moral when he is only uncomfortable.

The Statue. In short, my daughter, if you go to heaven without being naturally qualified for it, you will not enjoy yourself there.

Ana. And who dares say that I am not naturally qualified for it? The most distinguished princes of the Church have never questioned it. I owe it to myself to leave this place at once.

The Devil. [Offended.] As you please, Señora. I should have expected better taste from you.

Ana. Father: I shall expect you to come with me. You cannot stay here. What will people say?

The Statue. People! Why, the best people are here—princes of the Church and all. So few go to heaven, and so many come here, that the blest, once called a heavenly host, are a continually dwindling minority. The saints, the fathers, the elect of long ago are the cranks, the faddists, the outsiders of today.

The Devil. It is true. From the beginning of my career I knew that I should win in the long run by sheer weight of public opinion, in spite of the long campaign of misrepresentation and calumny against me. At the bottom the universe is a constitutional one; and with such a majority as mine I cannot be kept permanently out of office.

Don Juan. I think, Ana, you had better stay here.

Ana. [Jealously.] You do not want me to go with you.

Don Juan. Surely you do not want to enter heaven in the company of a reprobate like me.

Ana. All souls are equally precious. You repent, do you not?

Don Juan. My dear Ana, you are silly. Do you suppose heaven is like earth, where people persuade themselves that what is done can be undone by repentance; that what is spoken can be unspoken by withdrawing it; that what is true can be annihilated by a general agreement to give it the lie? No: heaven is the home of the masters of reality: that is why I am going thither.

Ana. Thank you: I am going to heaven for happiness. I have had quite enough of reality on earth.

Don Juan. Then you must stay here; for hell is the home of the unreal and of the seekers for happiness. It is the only refuge from heaven, which is, as I tell you, the home of the masters of reality, and from earth, which is the home of the slaves of reality. The earth is a nursery in which men and women play at being heroes and heroines, saints and sinners; but they are dragged down from their fool's paradise by their bodies: hunger and cold and thirst, age and decay and disease, death above all, make

them slaves of reality: thrice a day meals must be eaten and digested: thrice a century a new generation must be engendered: ages of faith, of romance, and of science are all driven at last to have but one prayer: "Make me a healthy animal." But here you escape this tyranny of the flesh; for here you are not an animal at all: you are a ghost, an appearance, an illusion, a convention, deathless, ageless: in a word, bodiless. There are no social questions here, no political questions, no religious questions, best of all, perhaps, no sanitary questions. Here you call your appearance beauty, your emotions love, your sentiments heroism, your aspirations virtue, just as you did on earth; but here there are no hard facts to contradict you, no ironic contrast of your needs with your pretensions, no human comedy, nothing but a perpetual romance, a universal melodrama. As our German friend put it in his poem, "the poetically nonsensical here is good sense; and the Eternal Feminine draws us ever upward and on"¹—without getting us a step farther. And yet you want to leave this paradise!

Ana. But if hell be so beautiful as this, how glorious must heaven be!

[THE DEVIL, THE STATUE, and DON JUAN all begin to speak at once in violent protest; then stop, abashed.]

Don Juan. I beg your pardon.

The Devil. Not at all. I interrupted you.

The Statue. You were going to say something.

Don Juan. After you, gentlemen.

The Devil. [To DON JUAN.] You have been so eloquent on the advantages of my dominions that I leave you to do equal justice to the drawbacks of the alternative establishment.

Don Juan. In heaven, as I picture it, dear lady, you live and work instead of playing and pretending. You face things as they are; you escape nothing but glamor; and your steadfastness and your peril are your glory. If the play still goes on here and on earth, and all the world is a stage, heaven is at least behind the scenes. But heaven cannot be described by metaphor. Thither I shall go presently, because there I hope to escape at last from lies and from the tedious, vulgar pursuit of happiness, to spend my eons in contemplation—

The Statue. Ugh!

Don Juan. Señor Commander: I do not blame your disgust: a picture gallery is a dull

¹ The concluding lines of Goethe's *Faust II*. Shaw's own translation?

place for a blind man. But even as you enjoy the contemplation of such romantic mirages as beauty and pleasure; so would I enjoy the contemplation of that which interests me above all things: namely, Life: the force that ever strives to attain greater power of contemplating itself. What made this brain of mine, do you think? Not the need to move my limbs; for a rat with half my brain moves as well as I. Not merely the need to do, but the need to know what I do, lest in my blind efforts to live I should be slaying myself.

The Statue. You would have slain yourself in your blind efforts to fence but for my foot slipping, my friend.

Don Juan. Audacious ribald: your laughter will finish in hideous boredom before morning.

The Statue. Ha ha! Do you remember how I frightened you when I said something like that to you from my pedestal in Seville?¹ It sounds rather flat without my trombones.

Don Juan. They tell me it generally sounds flat with them, Commander.

Ana. Oh, do not interrupt with these frivolities, father. Is there nothing in heaven but contemplation, Juan?

Don Juan. In the heaven I seek, no other joy. But there is the work of helping Life in its struggle upward. Think of how it wastes and scatters itself, how it raises up obstacles to itself and destroys itself in its ignorance and blindness. It needs a brain, this irresistible force, lest in its ignorance it should resist itself. What a piece of work is man! says the poet. Yes; but what a blunderer! Here is the highest miracle of organization yet attained by life, the most intensely alive thing that exists, the most conscious of all the organisms; and yet, how wretched are his brains! Stupidity made sordid and cruel by the realities learnt from toil and poverty: Imagination resolved to starve sooner than face these realities, piling up illusions to hide them, and calling itself cleverness, genius! And each accusing the other of its own defect: Stupidity accusing Imagination of folly, and Imagination accusing Stupidity of ignorance: whereas, alas! Stupidity has all the knowledge, and Imagination all the intelligence.

The Devil. And a pretty kettle of fish they make of it between them. Did I not say, when I was arranging that affair of Faust's, that all Man's reason has done for him is to make him beastlier than any beast?² One

splendid body is worth the brains of a hundred dyspeptic, flatulent philosophers.

Don Juan. You forget that brainless magnificence of body has been tried. Things immeasurably greater than man in every respect but brain have existed and perished. The megatherium, the ichthyosaurus have paced the earth with seven-league steps and hidden the day with cloud-vast wings. Where are they now? Fossils in museums, and so few and imperfect at that, that a knuckle bone or a tooth of one of them is prized beyond the lives of a thousand soldiers. These things lived and wanted to live; but for lack of brains they did not know how to carry out their purpose, and so destroyed themselves.

The Devil. And is Man any the less destroying himself for all this boasted brain of his? Have you walked up and down upon the earth lately?¹ I have; and I have examined Man's wonderful inventions. And I tell you that in the arts of life man invents nothing; but in the arts of death he outdoes Nature herself, and produces by chemistry and machinery all the slaughter of plague, pestilence, and famine. The peasant I tempt today eats and drinks what was eaten and drunk by the peasants of ten thousand years ago; and the house he lives in has not altered as much in a thousand centuries as the fashion of a lady's bonnet in a score of weeks. But when he goes out to slay, he carries a marvel of mechanism that lets loose at the touch of his finger all the hidden molecular energies, and leaves the javelin, the arrow, the blowpipe of his fathers far behind. In the arts of peace Man is a bungler. I have seen his cotton factories and the like, with machinery that a greedy dog could have invented if it had wanted money instead of food. I know his clumsy typewriters and bungling locomotives and tedious bicycles: they are toys compared to the Maxim gun, the submarine torpedo boat. There is nothing in Man's industrial machinery but his greed and sloth: his heart is in his weapons. This marvellous force of Life of which you boast is a force of Death: Man measures his strength by his destructiveness. What is his religion? An excuse for hating me. What is his law? An excuse for hanging you. What is his morality? Gentility! an excuse for consuming without producing. What is his art? An excuse for gloating over pictures of slaughter. What are his politics? Either the worship of a despot because a despot can kill, or parliamentary cock-fighting. I spent

¹ In *Don Giovanni* the first words the Statue sings are: "Your laughter will end before morning."

² See Mephistopheles' first speech in Goethe's *Faust*.

¹ See *Job* 1:7.

an evening lately in a certain celebrated legislature, and heard the pot lecturing the kettle for its blackness, and ministers answering questions. When I left I chalked up on the door the old nursery saying "Ask no questions and you will be told no lies." I bought a sixpenny family magazine, and found it full of pictures of young men shooting and stabbing one another. I saw a man die: he was a London bricklayer's laborer with seven children. He left seventeen pounds club money; and his wife spent it all on his funeral and went into the workhouse with the children next day. She would not have spent sevenpence on her children's schooling: the law had to force her to let them be taught gratuitously; but on death she spent all she had. Their imagination glows, their energies rise up at the idea of death, these people: they love it; and the more horrible it is the more they enjoy it. Hell is a place far above their comprehension: they derive their notion of it from two of the greatest fools that ever lived, an Italian and an Englishman.¹ The Italian described it as a place of mud, frost, filth, fire, and venomous serpents: all torture. This ass, when he was not lying about me, was maundering about some woman whom he saw once in the street. The Englishman described me as being expelled from heaven by cannons and gunpowder; and to this day every Briton believes that the whole of his silly story is in the Bible. What else he says I do not know; for it is all in a long poem which neither I nor anyone else ever succeeded in wading through. It is the same in everything. The highest form of literature is the tragedy, a play in which everybody is murdered at the end. In the old chronicles you read of earthquakes and pestilences, and are told that these shewed the power and majesty of God and the littleness of Man. Nowadays the chronicles describe battles. In a battle two bodies of men shoot at one another with bullets and explosive shells until one body runs away, when the others chase the fugitives on horseback and cut them to pieces as they fly. And this, the chronicle concludes, shews the greatness and majesty of empires, and the littleness of the vanquished. Over such battles the people run about the streets yelling with delight, and egg their Governments on to spend hundreds of millions of money in the slaughter, whilst the strongest Ministers dare not spend an extra penny in the pound against the poverty and pestilence through which they themselves

daily walk. I could give you a thousand instances; but they all come to the same thing: the power that governs the earth is not the power of Life but of Death; and the inner need that has nerved Life to the effort of organising itself into the human being is not the need for higher life but for a more efficient engine of destruction. The plague, the famine, the earthquake, the tempest were too spasmodic in their action; the tiger and crocodile were too easily satiated and not cruel enough: something more constantly, more ruthlessly, more ingeniously destructive was needed; and that something was Man, the inventor of the rack, the stake, the gallows, the electric chair; of sword and gun and poison gas: above all, of justice, duty, patriotism, and all the other isms by which even those who are clever enough to be humanely disposed are persuaded to become the most destructive of all the destroyers.

Don Juan. Pshaw! all this is old. Your weak side, my diabolic friend, is that you have always been a gull: you take Man at his own valuation. Nothing would flatter him more than your opinion of him. He loves to think of himself as bold and bad. He is neither one nor the other: he is only a coward. Call him tyrant, murderer, pirate, bully; and he will adore you, and swagger about with the consciousness of having the blood of the old sea kings in his veins. Call him liar and thief; and he will only take an action against you for libel. But call him coward; and he will go mad with rage: he will face death to outface that stinging truth. Man gives every reason for his conduct save one, every excuse for his crimes save one, every plea for his safety save one; and that one is his cowardice. Yet all his civilization is founded on his cowardice, on his abject tameness, which he calls his respectability. There are limits to what a mule or an ass will stand; but Man will suffer himself to be degraded until his vileness becomes so loathsome to his oppressors that they themselves are forced to reform it.

The Devil. Precisely. And these are the creatures in whom you discover what you call a Life Force!

Don Juan. Yes; for now comes the most surprising part of the whole business.

The Statue. What's that?

Don Juan. Why, that you can make any of these cowards brave by simply putting an idea into his head.

The Statue. Stuff! As an old soldier I admit the cowardice: it's as universal as sea sickness, and matters just as little. But that about putting an idea into a man's head is

¹ Dante and Milton.

stuff and nonsense. In a battle all you need to make you fight is a little hot blood and the knowledge that it's more dangerous to lose than to win.

Don Juan. That is perhaps why battles are so useless. But men never really overcome fear until they imagine they are fighting to further a universal purpose—fighting for an idea, as they call it. Why was the Crusader braver than the pirate? Because he fought, not for himself, but for the Cross. What force was it that met him with a valor as reckless as his own? The force of men who fought, not for themselves, but for Islam. They took Spain from us, though we were fighting for our very hearths and homes; but when we, too, fought for that mighty idea, a Catholic Church, we swept them back to Africa.

The Devil. [Ironically.] What! you a Catholic, Señor Don Juan! A devotee! My congratulations.

The Statue. [Seriously.] Come, come! as a soldier, I can listen to nothing against the Church.

Don Juan. Have no fear, Commander: this idea of a Catholic Church will survive Islam, will survive the Cross, will survive even that vulgar pageant of incompetent schoolboyish gladiators which you call the Army.

The Statue. Juan: you will force me to call you to account for this.

Don Juan. Useless: I cannot fence. Every idea for which Man will die will be a Catholic idea. When the Spaniard learns at last that he is no better than the Saracen, and his prophet no better than Mahomet, he will arise, more Catholic than ever, and die on a barricade across the filthy slum he starves in, for a universal liberty and equality.

The Statue. Bosh!

Don Juan. What you call bosh is the only thing men dare die for. Later on, Liberty will not be Catholic enough: men will die for human perfection, to which they will sacrifice all their liberty gladly.

The Devil. Ay: they will never be at a loss for an excuse for killing one another.

Don Juan. What of that? It is not death that matters, but the fear of death. It is not killing and dying that degrades us, but base living, and accepting the wages and profits of degradation. Better ten dead men than one live slave or his master. Men shall yet rise up, father against son and brother against brother, and kill one another for the great Catholic idea of abolishing slavery.

The Devil. Yes, when the Liberty and Equality of which you prate shall have made

free white Christians cheaper in the labor market than black heathen slaves sold by auction at the block.

Don Juan. Never fear! the white laborer shall have his turn too. But I am not now defending the illusory forms the great ideas take. I am giving you examples of the fact that this creature Man, who in his own selfish affairs is a coward to the backbone, will fight for an idea like a hero. He may be abject as a citizen; but he is dangerous as a fanatic. He can only be enslaved whilst he is spiritually weak enough to listen to reason. I tell you, gentlemen, if you can shew a man a piece of what he now calls God's work to do, and what he will later on call by many new names, you can make him entirely reckless of the consequences to himself personally.

Ana. Yes: he shirks all his responsibilities, and leaves his wife to grapple with them.

The Statue. Well said, daughter. Do not let him talk you out of your common sense.

The Devil. Alas! Señor Commander, now that we have got on to the subject of Woman, he will talk more than ever. However, I confess it is for me the one supremely interesting subject.

Don Juan. To a woman, Señora, man's duties and responsibilities begin and end with the task of getting bread for her children. To her, Man is only a means to the end of getting children and rearing them.

Ana. Is that your idea of a woman's mind? I call it cynical and disgusting animalism.

Don Juan. Pardon me, Ana: I said nothing about a woman's whole mind. I spoke of her view of Man as a separate sex. It is no more cynical than her view of herself as above all things a Mother. Sexually, Woman is Nature's contrivance for perpetuating its highest achievement. Sexually, Man is Woman's contrivance for fulfilling Nature's behest in the most economical way. She knows by instinct that far back in the evolutionary process she invented him, differentiated him, created him in order to produce something better than the single-sexed process can produce. Whilst he fulfils the purpose for which she made him, he is welcome to his dreams, his follies, his ideals, his heroisms, provided that the keystone of them all is the worship of woman, of motherhood, of the family, of the hearth. But how rash and dangerous it was to invent a separate creature whose sole function was her own impregnation! For mark what has happened. First, Man has multiplied on her hands until there are as many men as women; so that she has been unable

to employ for her purposes more than a fraction of the immense energy she has left at his disposal by saving him the exhausting labor of gestation. This superfluous energy has gone to his brain and to his muscle. He has become too strong to be controlled by her bodily, and too imaginative and mentally vigorous to be content with mere self-reproduction. He has created civilization without consulting her, taking her domestic labor for granted as the foundation of it.

Ana. That is true, at all events.

The Devil. Yes; and this civilization! what is it, after all?

Don Juan. After all, an excellent peg to hang your cynical commonplaces on; but before all, it is an attempt on Man's part to make himself something more than the mere instrument of Woman's purpose. So far, the result of Life's continual effort, not only to maintain itself, but to achieve higher and higher organization and completer self-consciousness, is only, at best, a doubtful campaign between its forces and those of Death and Degeneration. The battles in this campaign are mere blunders, mostly won, like actual military battles, in spite of the commanders.

The Statue. That is a dig at me. No matter: go on, go on.

Don Juan. It is a dig at a much higher power than you, Commander. Still, you must have noticed in your profession that even a stupid general can win battles when the enemy's general is a little stupider.

The Statue. [Very seriously.] Most true, Juan, most true. Some donkeys have amazing luck.

Don Juan. Well, the Life Force is stupid; but it is not so stupid as the forces of Death and Degeneration. Besides, these are in its pay all the time. And so Life wins, after a fashion. What mere copiousness of fecundity can supply and mere greed preserve, we possess. The survival of whatever form of civilization can produce the best rifle and the best fed riflemen is assured.

The Devil. Exactly! the survival, not of the most effective means of Life but of the most effective means of Death. You always come back to my point, in spite of your wriggings and evasions and sophistries, not to mention the intolerable length of your speeches.

Don Juan. Oh, come! who began making long speeches? However, if I overtax your intellect, you can leave us and seek the society of love and beauty and the rest of your favorite boredom.

The Devil. [Much offended.] This is not

fair, Don Juan, and not civil. I am also on the intellectual plane. Nobody can appreciate it more than I do. I am arguing fairly with you, and, I think, successfully refuting you. Let us go on for another hour if you like.

Don Juan. Good: let us.

The Statue. Not that I see any prospect of your coming to any point in particular, Juan. Still, since in this place, instead of merely killing time we have to kill eternity, go ahead by all means.

Don Juan. [Somewhat impatiently.] My point, you marble-headed old masterpiece, is only a step ahead of you. Are we agreed that Life is a force which has made innumerable experiments in organizing itself; that the mammoth and the man, the mouse and the megatherium, the flies and the fleas and the Fathers of the Church, are all more or less successful attempts to build up that raw force into higher and higher individuals, the ideal individual being omnipotent, omniscient, infallible, and withal completely, unilludely self-conscious: in short, a god?

The Devil. I agree, for the sake of argument.

The Statue. I agree, for the sake of avoiding argument.

Ana. I most emphatically disagree as regards the Fathers of the Church; and I must beg you not to drag them into the argument.

Don Juan. I did so purely for the sake of alliteration, Ana; and I shall make no further allusion to them. And now, since we are, with that exception, agreed so far, will you not agree with me further that Life has not measured the success of its attempts at god-head by the beauty or bodily perfection of the result, since in both these respects the birds, as our friend Aristophanes long ago pointed out, are so extraordinarily superior, with their power of flight and their lovely plumage, and, may I add, the touching poetry of their loves and nestings, that it is inconceivable that Life, having once produced them, should, if love and beauty were her object, start off on another line and labor at the clumsy elephant and the hideous ape, whose grandchildren we are?

Ana. Aristophanes was a heathen; and you, Juan, I am afraid, are very little better.

The Devil. You conclude, then, that Life was driving at clumsiness and ugliness?

Don Juan. No, perverse devil that you are, a thousand times no. Life was driving at brains—at its darling object: an organ by which it can attain not only self-consciousness but self-understanding.

The Statue. This is metaphysics, Juan.

Why the devil should—— [To THE DEVIL.]
I beg your pardon.

The Devil. Pray dont mention it. I have always regarded the use of my name to secure additional emphasis as a high compliment to me. It is quite at your service, Commander.

The Statue. Thank you: thats very good of you. Even in heaven, I never quite got out of my old military habits of speech. What I was going to ask Juan was why Life should bother itself about getting a brain. Why should it want to understand itself? Why not be content to enjoy itself?

Don Juan. Without a brain, Commander, you would enjoy yourself without knowing it, and so lose all the fun.

The Statue. True, most true. But I am quite content with brain enough to know that I'm enjoying myself. I dont want to understand why. In fact, I'd rather not. My experience is that one's pleasures dont bear thinking about.

Don Juan. That is why intellect is so unpopular. But to Life, the force behind the Man, intellect is a necessity, because without it he blunders into death. Just as Life, after ages of struggle, evolved that wonderful bodily organ the eye, so that the living organism could see where it was going and what was coming to help or threaten it, and thus avoid a thousand dangers that formerly slew it, so it is evolving today a mind's eye that shall see, not the physical world, but the purpose of life, and thereby enable the individual to work for that purpose instead of thwarting and baffling it by setting up shortsighted personal aims as at present. Even as it is, only one sort of man has ever been happy, has ever been universally respected among all the conflicts of interests and illusions.

The Statue. You mean the military man.

Don Juan. Commander: I do not mean the military man. When the military man approaches, the world locks up its spoons and packs off its womankind. No: I sing not arms and the hero, but the philosophic man: he who seeks in contemplation to discover the inner will of the world, in invention to discover the means of fulfilling that will, and in action to do that will by the so-discovered means. Of all other sorts of men I declare myself tired. They are tedious failures. When I was on earth, professors of all sorts prowled round me feeling for an unhealthy spot in me on which they could fasten. The doctors of medicine bade me consider what I must do to save my body,

and offered me quack cures for imaginary diseases. I replied that I was not a hypochondriac; so they called me Ignoramus and went their way. The doctors of divinity bade me consider what I must do to save my soul; but I was not a spiritual hypochondriac any more than a bodily one, and would not trouble myself about that either; so they called me Atheist and went their way. After them came the politician, who said there was only one purpose in nature, and that was to get him into parliament. I told him I did not care whether he got into parliament or not; so he called me Mugwump and went his way. Then came the romantic man, the Artist, with his love songs and his paintings and his poems; and with him I had great delight for many years, and some profit; for I cultivated my senses for his sake; and his songs taught me to hear better, his paintings to see better, and his poems to feel more deeply. But he led me at last into the worship of Woman.

Ana. Juan!

Don Juan. Yes: I came to believe that in her voice was all the music of the song, in her face all the beauty of the painting, and in her soul all the emotion of the poem.

Ana. And you were disappointed, I suppose. Well, was it her fault that you attributed all these perfections to her?

Don Juan. Yes, partly. For with a wonderful instinctive cunning, she kept silent and allowed me to glorify her: to mistake my own visions, thoughts, and feelings for hers. Now my friend the romantic man was often too poor or too timid to approach those women who were beautiful or refined enough to seem to realize his ideal; and so he went to his grave believing in his dream. But I was more favored by nature and circumstance. I was of noble birth and rich; and when my person did not please, my conversation flattered, though I generally found myself fortunate in both.

The Statue. Coxcomb!

Don Juan. Yes; but even my coxcombry pleased. Well, I found that when I had touched a woman's imagination, she would allow me to persuade myself that she loved me; but when my suit was granted she never said "I am happy; my love is satisfied": she always said, first, "At last, the barriers are down," and second, "When will you come again?"

Ana. That is exactly what men say.

Don Juan. I protest I never said it. But all women say it. Well, these two speeches always alarmed me; for the first meant that

the lady's impulse had been solely to throw down my fortifications and gain my citadel; and the second openly announced that henceforth she regarded me as her property, and counted my time as already wholly at her disposal.

The Devil. That is where your want of heart came in.

The Statue. [*Shaking his head.*] You shouldnt repeat what a woman says, Juan.

Ana. [*Severely.*] It should be sacred to you.

The Statue. Still, they certainly do say it. I never minded the barriers; but there was always a slight shock about the other, unless one was very hard hit indeed.

Don Juan. Then the lady, who had been happy and idle enough before, became anxious, preoccupied with me, always intriguing, conspiring, pursuing, watching, waiting, bent wholly on making sure of her prey: I being the prey, you understand. Now this was not what I had bargained for. It may have been very proper and very natural; but it was not music, painting, poetry, and joy incarnated in a beautiful woman. I ran away from it. I ran away from it very often: in fact, I became famous for running away from it.

Ana. Infamous, you mean.

Don Juan. I did not run away from you. Do you blame me for running away from the others?

Ana. Nonsense, man. You are talking to a woman of 77 now. If you had had the chance, you would have run away from me too—if I had let you. You would not have found it so easy with me as with some of the others. If men will not be faithful to their home and their duties, they must be made to be. I daresay you all want to marry lovely incarnations of music and painting and poetry. Well, you cant have them, because they dont exist. If flesh and blood is not good enough for you, you must go without: thats all. Women have to put up with flesh-and-blood husbands—and little enough of that too, sometimes; and you will have to put up with flesh-and-blood wives. [*THE DEVIL looks dubious. THE STATUE makes a wry face.*] I see you dont like that, any of you; but it's true, for all that; so if you dont like it you can lump it.

Don Juan. My dear lady, you have put my whole case against romance into a few sentences. That is just why I turned my back on the romantic man with the artistic nature, as he called his infatuation. I thanked him for teaching me to use my eyes and ears; but I told him that his beauty

worshipping and happiness hunting and women idealizing was not worth a dump as a philosophy of life; so he called me Philistine and went his way.

Ana. It seems that Woman taught you something, too, with all her defects.

Don Juan. She did more: she interpreted all the other teaching for me. Ah, my friends, when the barriers were down for the first time, what an astounding illumination! I had been prepared for infatuation, for intoxication, for all the illusions of love's young dream; and lo! never was my perception clearer, nor my criticism more ruthless. The most jealous rival of my mistress never saw every blemish in her more keenly than I. I was not duped: I took her without chloroform.

Ana. But you did take her.

Don Juan. That was the revelation. Up to that moment I had never lost the sense of being my own master; never consciously taken a single step until my reason had examined and approved it. I had come to believe that I was a purely rational creature: a thinker! I said, with the foolish philosopher,¹ "I think; therefore I am." It was Woman who taught me to say "I am; therefore I think." And also "I would think more; therefore I must be more."

The Statue. This is extremely abstract and metaphysical, Juan. If you would stick to the concrete, and put your discoveries in the form of entertaining anecdotes about your adventures with women, your conversation would be easier to follow.

Don Juan. Bah! what need I add? Do you not understand that when I stood face to face with Woman, every fibre in my clear critical brain warned me to spare her and save myself? My morals said No. My conscience said No. My chivalry and pity for her said No. My prudent regard for myself said No. My ear, practised on a thousand songs and symphonies; my eye, exercised on a thousand paintings; tore her voice, her features, her color to shreds. I caught all those tell-tale resemblances to her father and mother by which I knew what she would be like in thirty years' time. I noted the gleam of gold from a dead tooth in the laughing mouth: I made curious observations of the strange odors of the chemistry of the nerves. The visions of my romantic reveries, in which I had trod the plains of heaven with a deathless, ageless creature of coral and ivory, deserted me in that supreme hour. I re-

¹ Descartes.

membered them and desperately strove to recover their illusion; but they now seemed the emptiest of inventions: my judgment was not to be corrupted: my brain still said No on every issue. And whilst I was in the act of framing my excuse to the lady, Life seized me and threw me into her arms as a sailor throws a scrap of fish into the mouth of a seabird.

The Statue. You might as well have gone without thinking such a lot about it, Juan. You are like all the clever men: you have more brains than is good for you.

The Devil. And were you not the happier for the experience, Señor Don Juan?

Don Juan. The happier; not the wiser, yes. That moment introduced me for the first time to myself, and, through myself, to the world. I saw then how useless it is to attempt to impose conditions on the irresistible force of Life; to preach prudence, careful selection, virtue, honor, chastity—

Ana. Don Juan: a word against chastity is an insult to me.

Don Juan. I say nothing of your chastity, Señora, since it took the form of a husband and twelve children. What more could you have done had you been the most abandoned of women?

Ana. I could have had twelve husbands and no children: that's what I could have done, Juan. And let me tell you that that would have made all the difference to the earth which I replenished.

The Statue. Bravo Ana! Juan: you are floored, quelled, annihilated.

Don Juan. No: for though that difference is the true essential difference—Doña Ana has, I admit, gone straight to the real point—yet it is not a difference of love or chastity, or even constancy; for twelve children by twelve different husbands would have replenished the earth perhaps more effectively. Suppose my friend Ottavio had died when you were thirty, you would never have remained a widow: you were too beautiful. Suppose the successor of Ottavio had died when you were forty, you would still have been irresistible; and a woman who marries twice marries three times if she becomes free to do so. Twelve lawful children borne by one highly respectable lady to three different fathers is not impossible nor condemned by public opinion. That such a lady may be more law-abiding than the poor girl whom we used to spurn into the gutter for bearing one unlawful infant is no doubt true; but dare you say she is less self-indulgent?

Ana. She is more virtuous: that is enough for me.

Don Juan. In that case, what is virtue but the Trade Unionism of the married? Let us face the facts, dear Ana. The Life Force respects marriage only because marriage is a contrivance of its own to secure the greatest number of children and the closest care of them. For honor, chastity, and all the rest of your moral figments it cares not a rap. Marriage is the most licentious of human institutions—

Ana. Juan!

The Statue. [*Protesting.*] Really!—

Don Juan. [*Determinedly.*] I say the most licentious of human institutions: that is the secret of its popularity. And a woman seeking a husband is the most unscrupulous of all the beasts of prey. The confusion of marriage with morality has done more to destroy the conscience of the human race than any other single error. Come, Ana! do not look shocked: you know better than any of us that marriage is a mantrap baited with simulated accomplishments and delusive idealizations. When your sainted mother, by dint of scoldings and punishments, forced you to learn how to play half a dozen pieces on the spinet—which she hated as much as you did—had she any other purpose than to delude your suitors into the belief that your husband would have in his home an angel who would fill it with melody, or at least play him to sleep after dinner? You married my friend Ottavio: well, did you ever open the spinet from the hour when the Church united him to you?

Ana. You are a fool, Juan. A young married woman has something else to do than sit at the spinet without any support for her back; so she gets out of the habit of playing.

Don Juan. Not if she loves music. No: believe me, she only throws away the bait when the bird is in the net.

Ana. [*Bitterly.*] And men, I suppose, never throw off the mask when their bird is in the net. The husband never becomes negligent, selfish, brutal—oh, never!

Don Juan. What do these recriminations prove, Ana? Only that the hero is as gross an imposture as the heroine.

Ana. It is all nonsense: most marriages are perfectly comfortable.

Don Juan. "Perfectly" is a strong expression, Ana. What you mean is that sensible people make the best of one another. Send me to the galleys and chain me to the felon whose number happens to be next before mine; and I must accept the inevitable and

make the best of the companionship. Many such companionships, they tell me, are touchingly affectionate; and most are at least tolerably friendly. But that does not make a chain a desirable ornament nor the galleys an abode of bliss. Those who talk most about the blessings of marriage and the constancy of its vows are the very people who declare that if the chain were broken and the prisoners left free to choose, the whole social fabric would fly asunder. You cannot have the argument both ways. If the prisoner is happy, why lock him in? If he is not, why pretend that he is?

Ana. At all events, let me take an old woman's privilege again, and tell you flatly that marriage peoples the world and debauchery does not.

Don Juan. How if a time come when this shall cease to be true? Do you not know that where there is a will there is a way? that whatever Man really wishes to do he will finally discover a means of doing? Well, you have done your best, you virtuous ladies, and others of your way of thinking, to bend Man's mind wholly towards honorable love as the highest good, and to understand by honorable love romance and beauty and happiness in the possession of beautiful, refined, delicate, affectionate women. You have taught women to value their own youth, health, shapeliness, and refinement above all things. Well, what place have squalling babies and household cares in this exquisite paradise of the senses and emotions? Is it not the inevitable end of it all that the human will shall say to the human brain: Invent me a means by which I can have love, beauty, romance, emotion, passion, without their wretched penalties, their expenses, their worries, their trials, their illnesses and agonies and risks of death, their retinue of servants and nurses and doctors and schoolmasters?

The Devil. All this, Señor Don Juan, is realized here in my realm.

Don Juan. Yes, at the cost of death. Man will not take it at that price: he demands the romantic delights of your hell whilst he is still on earth. Well, the means will be found: the brain will not fail when the will is in earnest. The day is coming when great nations will find their numbers dwindling from census to census; when the six-roomed villa will rise in price above the family mansion; when the viciously reckless poor and the stupidly pious rich will delay the extinction of the race only by degrading it; whilst the boldly prudent, the thriftily selfish and am-

bitious, the imaginative and poetic, the lovers of money and solid comfort, the worshippers of success, of art, and of love, will all oppose to the Force of Life the device of sterility.

The Statue. That is all very eloquent, my young friend; but if you had lived to Ana's age, or even to mine, you would have learned that the people who get rid of the fear of poverty and children and all the other family troubles, and devote themselves to having a good time of it, only leave their minds free for the fear of old age and ugliness and impotence and death. The childless laborer is more tormented by his wife's idleness and her constant demands for amusement and distraction than he could be by twenty children; and his wife is more wretched than he. I have had my share of vanity; for as a young man I was admired by women; and as a statue I am praised by art critics. But I confess that had I found nothing to do in the world but wallow in these delights I should have cut my throat. When I married Ana's mother—or perhaps, to be strictly correct, I should rather say when I at last gave in and allowed Ana's mother to marry me—I knew that I was planting thorns in my pillow, and that marriage for me, a swaggering young officer thitherto unvanquished, meant defeat and capture.

Ana. [Scandalized.] Father!

The Statue. I am sorry to shock you, my love; but since Juan has stripped every rag of decency from the discussion I may as well tell the frozen truth.

Ana. Hmf! I suppose I was one of the thorns.

The Statue. By no means: you were often a rose. You see, your mother had most of the trouble you gave.

Don Juan. Then may I ask, Commander, why you have left heaven to come here and wallow, as you express it, in sentimental beatitudes which you confess would once have driven you to cut your throat?

The Statue. [Struck by this.] Egad, that's true.

The Devil. [Alarmed.] What! You are going back from your word! [To DON JUAN.] And all your philosophizing has been nothing but a mask for proselytizing! [To THE STATUE.] Have you forgotten already the hideous dulness from which I am offering you a refuge here? [To DON JUAN.] And does your demonstration of the approaching sterilization and extinction of mankind lead to anything better than making the

most of those pleasures of art and love which you yourself admit refined you, elevated you, developed you?

Don Juan. I never demonstrated the extinction of mankind. Life cannot will its own extinction either in its blind amorphous state or in any of the forms into which it has organized itself. I had not finished when His Excellency interrupted me.

The Statue. I begin to doubt whether you ever will finish, my friend. You are extremely fond of hearing yourself talk.

Don Juan. True; but since you have endured so much, you may as well endure to the end. Long before this sterilization which I described becomes more than a clearly foreseen possibility, the reaction will begin. The great central purpose of breeding the race: ay, breeding it to heights now deemed superhuman: that purpose which is now hidden in a mephitic cloud of love and romance and prudery and fastidiousness, will break through into clear sunlight as a purpose no longer to be confused with the gratification of personal fancies, the impossible realization of boys' and girls' dreams of bliss, or the need of older people for companionship or money. The plain-spoken marriage services of the vernacular Churches will no longer be abbreviated and half suppressed as indelicate. The sober decency, earnestness, and authority of their declaration of the real purpose of marriage will be honored and accepted, whilst their romantic vowings and pledgings and until-death-do-us-partings and the like will be expunged as unbearable frivolities. Do my sex the justice to admit, Señora, that we have always recognized that the sex relation is not a personal or friendly relation at all.

Ana. Not a personal or friendly relation! What relation is more personal? more sacred? more holy?

Don Juan. Sacred and holy, if you like, Ana, but not personally friendly. Your relation to God is sacred and holy: dare you call it personally friendly? In the sex relation the universal creative energy, of which the parties are both the helpless agents, overrides and sweeps away all personal considerations, and dispenses with all personal relations. The pair may be utter strangers to one another, speaking different languages, differing in race and color, in age and disposition, with no bond between them but a possibility of that fecundity for the sake of which the Life Force throws them into one another's arms at the exchange of a glance. Do we not recognize this by allowing marriages to be made by parents without con-

sulting the woman? Have you not often expressed your disgust at the immorality of the English nation, in which women and men of noble birth become acquainted and court each other like peasants? And how much does even the peasant know of his bride or she of him before he engages himself? Why, you would not make a man your lawyer or your family doctor on so slight an acquaintance as you would fall in love with and marry him!

Ana. Yes, Juan: we all know the libertine's philosophy. Always ignore the consequences to the woman.

Don Juan. The consequences, yes: they justify her fierce grip of the man. But surely you do not call that attachment a sentimental one. As well call the policeman's attachment to his prisoner a love relation.

Ana. You see you have to confess that marriage is necessary, though, according to you, love is the slightest of all human relations.

Don Juan. How do you know that it is not the greatest of all human relations? far too great to be a personal matter. Could your father have served his country if he had refused to kill an enemy of Spain unless he personally hated him? Can a woman serve her country if she refuses to marry any man she does not personally love? You know it is not so: the woman of noble birth marries as the man of noble birth fights, on political and family grounds, not on personal ones.

The Statue. [*Impressed.*] A very clever point that, Juan: I must think it over. You are really full of ideas. How did you come to think of this one?

Don Juan. I learnt it by experience. When I was on earth, and made those proposals to ladies which, though universally condemned, have made me so interesting a hero of legend, I was not infrequently met in some such way as this. The lady would say that she would countenance my advances, provided they were honorable. On inquiring what that proviso meant, I found that it meant that I proposed to get possession of her property if she had any, or to undertake her support for life if she had not; that I desired her continual companionship, counsel, and conversation to the end of my days, and would take a most solemn oath to be always enraptured by them: above all, that I would turn my back on all other women for ever for her sake. I did not object to these conditions because they were exorbitant and inhuman: it was their extraordinary irrelevance that prostrated me. I invariably replied with perfect frankness that I had never dreamt of

any of these things; that unless the lady's character and intellect were equal or superior to my own, her conversation must degrade and her counsel mislead me; that her constant companionship might, for all I knew, become intolerably tedious to me; that I could not answer for my feelings for a week in advance, much less to the end of my life; that to cut me off from all natural and unconstrained intercourse with half my fellow-creatures would narrow and warp me if I submitted to it, and, if not, would bring me under the curse of clandestinity; that, finally, my proposals to her were wholly unconnected with any of these matters, and were the outcome of a perfectly simple impulse of my manhood towards her womanhood.

Ana. You mean that it was an immoral impulse.

Don Juan. Nature, my dear lady, is what you call immoral. I blush for it; but I cannot help it. Nature is a pandar, Time a wrecker, and Death a murderer. I have always preferred to stand up to those facts and build institutions on their recognition. You prefer to propitiate the three devils by proclaiming their chastity, their thrift, and their loving kindness; and to base your institutions on these flatteries. Is it any wonder that the institutions do not work smoothly?

The Statue. What used the ladies to say, Juan?

Don Juan. Oh, come! Confidence for confidence. First tell me what you used to say to the ladies.

The Statue. I! Oh, I swore that I would be faithful to the death; that I should die if they refused me; that no woman could ever be to me what she was——

Ana. She! Who?

The Statue. Whoever it happened to be at the time, my dear. I had certain things I always said. One of them was that even when I was eighty, one white hair of the woman I loved would make me tremble more than the thickest gold tress from the most beautiful young head.¹ Another was that I could not bear the thought of anyone else being the mother of my children.

Don Juan. [Revolted.] You old rascal!

The Statue. [Stoutly.] Not a bit; for I really believed it with all my soul at the moment. I had a heart: not like you. And it was this sincerity that made me successful.

Don Juan. Sincerity! To be fool enough to believe a ramping, stamping, thumping lie; that is what you call sincerity! To be so greedy for a woman that you deceive your-

self in your eagerness to deceive her: sincerity, you call it!

The Statue. Oh, damn your sophistries! I was a man in love, not a lawyer. And the women loved me for it, bless them!

Don Juan. They made you think so. What will you say when I tell you that though I played the lawyer so callously, they made me think so too? I also had my moments of infatuation in which I gushed nonsense and believed it. Sometimes the desire to give pleasure by saying beautiful things so rose in me on the flood of emotion that I said them recklessly. At other times I argued against myself with a devilish coldness that drew tears. But I found it just as hard to escape when I was cruel as when I was kind. When the lady's instinct was set on me, there was nothing for it but lifelong servitude or flight.

Ana. You dare boast, before me and my father, that every woman found you irresistible.

Don Juan. Am I boasting? It seems to me that I cut the most pitiable of figures. Besides, I said "when the lady's instinct was set on me." It was not always so; and then, heavens! what transports of virtuous indignation! what overwhelming defiance to the dastardly seducer! what scenes of Imogen and Iachimo!¹

Ana. I made no scenes. I simply called my father.

Don Juan. And he came, sword in hand, to vindicate outraged honor and morality by murdering me.

The Statue. Murdering! What do you mean? Did I kill you or did you kill me?

Don Juan. Which of us was the better fencer?

The Statue. I was.

Don Juan. Of course you were. And yet you, the hero of those scandalous adventures you have just been relating to us, you had the effrontery to pose as the avenger of outraged morality and condemn me to death! You would have slain me but for an accident.

The Statue. I was expected to, Juan. That is how things were arranged on earth. I was not a social reformer; and I always did what it was customary for a gentleman to do.

Don Juan. That may account for your attacking me, but not for the revolting hypocrisy of your subsequent proceedings as a statue.

¹In Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* Iachimo, scoffing at feminine virtue, attempts for a wager to seduce the innocent Imogen, wife of the exiled Posthumus.

The Statue. That all came of my going to heaven.

The Devil. I still fail to see, Señor Don Juan, that these episodes in your earthly career and in that of the Señor Commander in any way discredit my view of life. Here, I repeat, you have all that you sought without anything that you shrank from.

Don Juan. On the contrary, here I have everything that disappointed me without anything that I have not already tried and found wanting. I tell you that as long as I can conceive something better than myself I cannot be easy unless I am striving to bring it into existence or clearing the way for it. That is the law of my life. That is the working within me of Life's incessant aspiration to higher organization, wider, deeper, intenser self-consciousness, and clearer self-understanding. It was the supremacy of this purpose that reduced love for me to the mere pleasure of a moment, art for me to the mere schooling of my faculties, religion for me to a mere excuse for laziness, since it had set up a God who looked at the world and saw that it was good, against the instinct in me that looked through my eyes at the world and saw that it could be improved. I tell you that in the pursuit of my own pleasure, my own health, my own fortune, I have never known happiness. It was not love for Woman that delivered me into her hands: it was fatigue, exhaustion. When I was a child, and bruised my head against a stone, I ran to the nearest woman and cried away my pain against her apron. When I grew up, and bruised my soul against the brutalities and stupidities with which I had to strive, I did again just what I had done as a child. I have enjoyed, too, my rests, my recuperations, my breathing times, my very prostrations after strife; but rather would I be dragged through all the circles of the foolish Italian's Inferno than through the pleasures of Europe. That is what has made this place of eternal pleasures so deadly to me. It is the absence of this instinct in you that makes you that strange monster called a Devil. It is the success with which you have diverted the attention of men from their real purpose, which in one degree or another is the same as mine, to yours, that has earned you the name of The Tempter. It is the fact that they are doing your will, or rather drifting with your want of will, instead of doing their own, that makes them the uncomfortable, false, restless, artificial, petulant, wretched creatures they are.

The Devil. [*Mortified.*] Señor Don Juan: you are uncivil to my friends.

Don Juan. Pooh! why should I be civil to them or to you? In this Palace of Lies a truth or two will not hurt you. Your friends are all the dullest dogs I know. They are not beautiful: they are only decorated. They are not clean: they are only shaved and starched. They are not dignified: they are only fashionably dressed. They are not educated: they are only college passmen. They are not religious: they are only pewrenters. They are not moral: they are only conventional. They are not virtuous: they are only cowardly. They are not even vicious: they are only "frail." They are not artistic: they are only lascivious. They are not prosperous: they are only rich. They are not loyal, they are only servile; not dutiful, only sheepish; not public-spirited, only patriotic; not courageous, only quarrelsome; not determined, only obstinate; not masterful, only domineering; not self-controlled, only obtuse; not self-respecting, only vain; not kind, only sentimental; not social, only gregarious; not considerate, only polite; not intelligent, only opinionated; not progressive, only factious; not imaginative, only superstitious; not just, only vindictive; not generous, only propitiatory; not disciplined, only cowed; and not truthful at all: liars every one of them, to the very backbone of their souls.

The Statue. Your flow of words is simply amazing, Juan. How I wish I could have talked like that to my soldiers.

The Devil. It is mere talk, though. It has all been said before; but what change has it ever made? What notice has the world ever taken of it?

Don Juan. Yes, it is mere talk. But why is it mere talk? Because, my friend, beauty, purity, respectability, religion, morality, art, patriotism, bravery, and the rest are nothing but words which I or anyone else can turn inside out like a glove. Were they realities, you would have to plead guilty to my indictments; but fortunately for your self-respect, my diabolical friend, they are not realities. As you say, they are mere words, useful for duping barbarians into adopting civilization, or the civilized poor into submitting to be robbed and enslaved. That is the family secret of the governing caste; and if we who are of that caste aimed at more Life for the world instead of at more power and luxury for our miserable selves, that secret would make us great. Now, since I, being a nobleman, am in the secret too, think how tedious to me must be your un-

ending cant about all these moralistic figments, and how squalidly disastrous your sacrifice of your lives to them! If you even believed in your moral game enough to play it fairly, it would be interesting to watch; but you dont: you cheat at every trick; and if your opponent outcheats you, you upset the table and try to murder him.

The Devil. On earth there may be some truth in this, because the people are uneducated and cannot appreciate my religion of love and beauty; but here—

Don Juan. Oh yes: I know. Here there is nothing but love and beauty. Ugh! it is like sitting for all eternity at the first act of a fashionable play, before the complications begin. Never in my worst moments of superstitious terror on earth did I dream that hell was so horrible. I live, like a hairdresser, in the continual contemplation of beauty, toying with silken tresses. I breathe an atmosphere of sweetness, like a confectioner's shopboy. Commander: are there any beautiful women in heaven?

The Statue. None. Absolutely none. All dowdies. Not two pennorth of jewellery among a dozen of them. They might be men of fifty.

Don Juan. I am impatient to get there. Is the word beauty ever mentioned; and are there any artistic people?

The Statue. I give you my word they wont admire a fine statue even when it walks past them.

Don Juan. I go.

The Devil. Don Juan: shall I be frank with you?

Don Juan. Were you not so before?

The Devil. As far as I went, yes. But I will now go further, and confess to you that men get tired of everything, of heaven no less than of hell; and that all history is nothing but a record of the oscillations of the world between these two extremes. An epoch is but a swing of the pendulum; and each generation thinks the world is progressing because it is always moving. But when you are as old as I am; when you have a thousand times wearied of heaven, like myself and the Commander, and a thousand times wearied of hell, as you are wearied now, you will no longer imagine that every swing from heaven to hell is an emancipation, every swing from hell to heaven an evolution. Where you now see reform, progress, fulfilment of upward tendency, continual ascent by Man on the stepping stones of his dead selves to higher things, you will see nothing but an infinite comedy of illu-

sion. You will discover the profound truth of the saying of my friend Koheleth, that there is nothing new under the sun. Vanitas vanitatum—

Don Juan. [Out of all patience.] By Heaven, this is worse than your cant about love and beauty. Clever dolt that you are, is a man no better than a worm, or a dog than a wolf, because he gets tired of everything? Shall he give up eating because he destroys his appetite in the act of gratifying it? Is a field idle when it is fallow? Can the Commander expend his hellish energy here without accumulating heavenly energy for his next term of blessedness? Granted that the great Life Force has hit on the device of the clockmaker's pendulum, and uses the earth for its bob; that the history of each oscillation, which seems so novel to us the actors, is but the history of the last oscillation repeated; nay more, that in the unthinkable infinitude of time the sun throws off the earth and catches it again a thousand times as a circus rider throws up a ball, and that our age-long epochs are but the moments between the toss and the catch, has the colossal mechanism no purpose?

The Devil. None, my friend. You think, because you have a purpose, Nature must have one. You might as well expect it to have fingers and toes because you have them.

Don Juan. But I should not have them if they served no purpose. And I, my friend, am as much a part of Nature as my own finger is a part of me. If my finger is the organ by which I grasp the sword and the mandoline, my brain is the organ by which Nature strives to understand itself. My dog's brain serves only my dog's purposes; but my own brain labors at a knowledge which does nothing for me personally but make my body bitter to me and my decay and death a calamity. Were I not possessed with a purpose beyond my own I had better be a ploughman than a philosopher; for the ploughman lives as long as the philosopher, eats more, sleeps better, and rejoices in the wife of his bosom with less misgivings. This is because the philosopher is in the grip of the Life Force. This Life Force says to him "I have done a thousand wonderful things unconsciously by merely willing to live and following the line of least resistance: now I want to know myself and my destination, and choose my path; so I have made a special brain—a philosopher's brain—to grasp this knowledge for me as the husbandman's hand grasps the plough for me. And this" says the Life Force to

the philosopher "must thou strive to do for me until thou diest, when I will make another brain and another philosopher to carry on the work."

The Devil. What is the use of knowing?

Don Juan. Why, to be able to choose the line of greatest advantage instead of yielding in the direction of the least resistance. Does a ship sail to its destination no better than a log drifts nowhither? The philosopher is Nature's pilot. And there you have our difference: to be in hell is to drift: to be in heaven is to steer.

The Devil. On the rocks, most likely.

Don Juan. Pooh! which ship goes oftenest on the rocks or to the bottom? the drifting ship or the ship with a pilot on board?

The Devil. Well, well, go your way, Señor Don Juan. I prefer to be my own master and not the tool of any blundering universal force. I know that beauty is good to look at; that music is good to hear; that love is good to feel; and that they are all good to think about and talk about. I know that to be well exercised in these sensations, emotions, and studies is to be a refined and cultivated being. Whatever they may say of me in churches on earth, I know that it is universally admitted in good society that the Prince of Darkness is a gentleman; and that is enough for me. As to your Life Force, which you think irresistible, it is the most resistible thing in the world for a person of any character. But if you are naturally vulgar and credulous, as all reformers are, it will thrust you first into religion, where you will sprinkle water on babies to save their souls from me; then it will drive you from religion into science, where you will snatch the babies from the water sprinkling and inoculate them with disease to save them from catching it accidentally; then you will take to politics, where you will become the catspaw of corrupt functionaries and the henchman of ambitious humbugs; and the end will be despair and decrepitude, broken nerve and shattered hopes, vain regrets for that worst and silliest of wastes and sacrifices, the waste and sacrifice of the power of enjoyment: in a word, the punishment of the fool who pursues the better before he has secured the good.

Don Juan. But at least I shall not be bored. The service of the Life Force has that advantage, at all events. So fare you well, Señor Satan.

The Devil. [*Amiably.*] Fare you well, Don Juan. I shall often think of our interesting chats about things in general. I wish you every happiness: heaven, as I said be-

fore, suits some people. But if you should change your mind, do not forget that the gates are always open here to the repentant prodigal. If you feel at any time that warmth of heart, sincere unforced affection, innocent enjoyment, and warm, breathing, palpitating reality—

Don Juan. Why not say flesh and blood at once, though we have left those two greasy commonplaces behind us?

The Devil. [*Angrily.*] You throw my friendly farewell back in my teeth, then, Don Juan?

Don Juan. By no means. But though there is much to be learnt from a cynical devil, I really cannot stand a sentimental one. Señor Commander: you know the way to the frontier of hell and heaven. Be good enough to direct me.

The Statue. Oh, the frontier is only the difference between two ways of looking at things. Any road will take you across it if you really want to get there.

Don Juan. Good. [*Saluting DOÑA ANA.*] Señora: your servant.

Ana. But I am going with you.

Don Juan. I can find my own way to heaven, Ana; not yours. [*He vanishes.*]

Ana. How annoying!

The Statue. [*Calling after him.*] Bon voyage, Juan! [*He wafts a final blast of his great rolling chords after him as a parting salute. A faint echo of the first ghostly melody comes back in acknowledgment.*] Ah! there he goes. [*Puffing a long breath out through his lips.*] Whew! How he does talk! They'll never stand it in heaven.

The Devil. [*Gloomily.*] His going is a political defeat. I cannot keep these Life Worshipers: they all go. This is the greatest loss I have had since that Dutch painter went: a fellow who would paint a hag of 70 with as much enjoyment as a Venus of 20.

The Statue. I remember: he came to heaven. Rembrandt.

The Devil. Ay, Rembrandt. There is something unnatural about these fellows. Do not listen to their gospel, Señor Commander: it is dangerous. Beware of the pursuit of the Superhuman: it leads to an indiscriminate contempt for the Human. To a man, horses and dogs and cats are mere species, outside the moral world. Well, to the Superman, men and women are a mere species too, also outside the moral world. This Don Juan was kind to women and courteous to men as your daughter here was kind to her pet cats and dogs; but such kindness is a denial of the exclusively human character of the soul.

The Statue. And who the deuce is the Superman?

The Devil. Oh, the latest fashion among the Life Force fanatics. Did you not meet in Heaven, among the new arrivals, that German Polish madman? what was his name? Nietzsche?

The Statue. Never heard of him.

The Devil. Well, he came here first, before he recovered his wits. I had some hopes of him; but he was a confirmed Life Force worshipper. It was he who raked up the Superman, who is as old as Prometheus; and the 20th century will run after this newest of the old crazes when it gets tired of the world, the flesh, and your humble servant.

The Statue. Superman is a good cry; and a good cry is half the battle. I should like to see this Nietzsche.

The Devil. Unfortunately he met Wagner here, and had a quarrel with him.

The Statue. Quite right, too. Mozart for me!

The Devil. Oh, it was not about music. Wagner once drifted into Life Force worship, and invented a Superman called Siegfried. But he came to his senses afterwards. So when they met here, Nietzsche denounced him as a renegade; and Wagner wrote a pamphlet to prove that Nietzsche was a Jew; and it ended in Nietzsche's going to heaven in a huff. And a good riddance too. And now, my friend, let us hasten to my palace and celebrate your arrival with a grand musical service.

The Statue. With pleasure: you're most kind.

The Devil. This way, Commander. We go down the old trap.

[*He places himself on the grave trap.*]

The Statue. Good. [*Reflectively.*] All the same, the Superman is a fine conception. There is something statuesque about it. [*He places himself on the grave trap beside THE DEVIL. It begins to descend slowly. Red glow from the abyss.*] Ah, this reminds me of old times.

The Devil. And me also.

Ana. Stop! [*The trap stops.*]

The Devil. You, Señora, cannot come this way. You will have an apotheosis. But you will be at the palace before us.

Ana. That is not what I stopped you for. Tell me: where can I find the Superman?

The Devil. He is not yet created, Señora.

The Statue. And never will be, probably. Let us proceed: the red fire will make me sneeze. [*They descend.*]

Ana. Not yet created! Then my work is not yet done. [*Crossing herself devoutly.*]

I believe in the Life to Come. [*Crying to the universe.*] A father! a father for the Superman!

[*She vanishes into the void; and again there is nothing: all existence seems suspended infinitely. Then, vaguely, there is a live human voice crying somewhere. One sees, with a shock, a mountain peak shewing faintly against a lighter background. The sky has returned from afar; and we suddenly remember where we were. The cry becomes distinct and urgent: it says Automobile, Automobile. The complete reality comes back with a rush: in a moment it is full morning in the Sierra; and the BRIGANDS are scrambling to their feet and making for the road as the goatherd runs down from the hill, warning them of the approach of another motor. TANNER and MENDOZA rise amazedly and stare at one another with scattered wits. STRAKER sits up to yawn for a moment before he gets on his feet, making it a point of honor not to shew any undue interest in the excitement of the BANDITS. MENDOZA gives a quick look to see that his followers are attending to the alarm; then exchanges a private word with TANNER.*]

Mendoza. Did you dream?

Tanner. Damnably. Did you?

Mendoza. Yes. I forget what. You were in it.

Tanner. So were you. Amazing!

Mendoza. I warned you. [*A shot is heard from the road.*] Dolts! they will play with that gun. [*THE BRIGANDS come running back scared.*] Who fired that shot? [*TO DUVAL.*] Was it you?

Duval. [*Breathless.*] I have not shoot. Dey shoot first.

Anarchist. I told you to begin by abolishing the State. Now we are all lost.

The Rowdy Social-Democrat. [*Stamped-ing across the amphitheatre.*] Run, everybody.

Mendoza. [*Collaring him; throwing him on his back; and drawing a knife.*] I stab the man who stirs. [*He blocks the way. The stampede is checked.*] What has happened?

The Sulky Social-Democrat. A motor——

The Anarchist. Three men——

Duval. Deux femmes——

Mendoza. Three men and two women! Why have you not brought them here? Are you afraid of them?

The Rowdy One. [*Getting up.*] Thyve a hescort. Ow, de-oooh luts ook it, Mendowza.

The Sulky One. Two armored cars full o soldiers at the ed o the valley.

Anarchist. The shot was fired in the air. It was a signal.

[STRAKER whistles his favorite air, which falls on the ears of the BRIGANDS like a funeral march.]

Tanner. It is not an escort, but an expedition to capture you. We were advised to wait for it; but I was in a hurry.

The Rowdy One. [In an agony of apprehension.] And Ow my good Lord, ere we are, wytin for em! Luts tike to the mahntns.

Mendoza. Idiot, what do you know about the mountains? Are you a Spaniard? You would be given up by the first shepherd you met. Besides, we are already within range of their rifles.

The Rowdy One. But——

Mendoza. Silence. Leave this to me. [To TANNER.] Comrade: you will not betray us.

Straker. Oo are you callin comrade?

Mendoza. Last night the advantage was with me. The robber of the poor was at the mercy of the robber of the rich. You offered your hand: I took it.

Tanner. I bring no charge against you, comrade. We have spent a pleasant evening with you: that is all.

Straker. I gev my and to nobody, see?

Mendoza. [Turning on him impressively.] Young man: if I am tried, I shall plead guilty, and explain what drove me from England, home, and duty. Do you wish to have the respectable name of Straker dragged through the mud of a Spanish criminal court? The police will search me. They will find Louisa's portrait. It will be published in the illustrated papers. You blench. It will be your doing, remember.

Straker. [With baffled rage.] I dont care about the court. It's avin our name mixed up with yours that I object to, you black-mailin swine, you.

Mendoza. Language unworthy of Louisa's brother! But no matter: you are muzzled: that is enough for us.

[He turns to face his own MEN, who back uneasily across the amphitheatre towards the cave to take refuge behind him, as a fresh party, muffled for motor-ing, comes from the road in riotous spir-its. ANN, who makes straight for TAN-NER, comes first; then VIOLET, helped over the rough ground by HECTOR hold-ing her right hand and RAMSDEN her left. MENDOZA goes to his presidential block and seats himself calmly with his rank and file grouped behind him, and

his STAFF, consisting of DUVAL and the ANARCHIST on his right and the two SOCIAL-DEMOCRATS on his left, support-ing him in flank.]

Ann. It's Jack!

Tanner. Caught!

Hector. Why, certainly it is. I said it was you, Tanner. Weve just been stopped by a puncture; the road is full of nails.

Violet. What are you doing here with all these men?

Ann. Why did you leave us without a word of warning?

Hector. I wawnt that bunch of roses, Miss Whitefield. [To TANNER.] When we found you were gone, Miss Whitefield bet me a bunch of roses my car would not overtake yours before you reached Monte Carlo.

Tanner. But this is not the road to Monte Carlo.

Hector. No matter. Miss Whitefield tracked you at every stopping place: she is a regular Sherlock Holmes.

Tanner. The Life Force! I am lost.

Octavius. [Bounding gaily down from the road into the amphitheatre, and coming between TANNER and STRAKER.] I am so glad you are safe, old chap. We were afraid you had been captured by brigands.

Ramsden. [Who has been staring at MENDOZA.] I seem to remember the face of your friend here.

[MENDOZA rises politely and advances with a smile between ANN and RAMSDEN.]

Hector. Why, so do I.

Octavius. I know you perfectly well, sir; but I cant think where I have met you.

Mendoza. [To VIOLET.] Do you remember me, madam?

Violet. Oh, quite well; but I am so stupid about names.

Mendoza. It was at the Savoy Hotel. [To HECTOR.] You sir, used to come with this lady [VIOLET.] to lunch. [To OCTAVIUS.] You, sir, often brought this lady [ANN.] and her mother to dinner on your way to the Lyceum Theatre. [To RAMSDEN.] You, sir, used to come to supper, with [Dropping his voice to a confidential but perfectly audible whisper.] several different ladies.

Ramsden. [Angrily.] Well, what is that to you, pray?

Octavius. Why, Violet, I thought you hardly knew one another before this trip, you and Malone!

Violet. [Vexed.] I suppose this person was the manager.

Mendoza. The waiter, madam. I have a grateful recollection of you all. I gathered

from the bountiful way in which you treated me that you all enjoyed your visits very much.

Violet. What impertinence!

[She turns her back on him, and goes up the hill with HECTOR.]

Ramsden. That will do, my friend. You do not expect these ladies to treat you as an acquaintance, I suppose, because you have waited on them at table.

Mendoza. Pardon me: it was you who claimed my acquaintance. The ladies followed your example. However, this display of the unfortunate manners of your class closes the incident. For the future, you will please address me with the respect due to a stranger and fellow traveller.

[He turns haughtily away and resumes his presidential seat.]

Tanner. There! I have found one man on my journey capable of reasonable conversation; and you all instinctively insult him. Even the New Man is as bad as any of you. Enry, you have behaved just like a miserable gentleman.

Straker. Gentleman! Not me.

Ramsden. Really, Tanner, this tone—

Ann. Dont mind him, Granny: you ought to know him by this time.

[She takes his arm and coaxes him away to the hill to join VIOLET and HECTOR. OCTAVIUS follows her, doglike.]

Violet. *[Calling from the hill.]* Here are the soldiers. They are getting out of their motors.

Duval. *[Panicstricken.]* Oh, nom de Dieu!

The Anarchist. Fools: the State is about to crush you because you spared it at the prompting of the political hangers-on of the bourgeoisie.

The Sulky Social-Democrat. *[Argumentative to the last.]* On the contrary, only by capturing the State machine—

The Anarchist. It is going to capture you.

The Rowdy Social-Democrat. *[His anguish culminating.]* Ow, chack it. Wot are we ere for? Wot are we wytin for?

Mendoza. *[Between his teeth.]* Go on. Talk politics, you idiots: nothing sounds more respectable. Keep it up. I tell you.

[The SOLDIERS line the road, commanding the amphitheatre with their rifles.

The BRIGANDS, struggling with an overwhelming impulse to hide behind one another, look as unconcerned as they can. MENDOZA rises superbly, with undaunted front. The OFFICER in command steps down from the road into the amphitheatre; looks hard at the BRIGANDS; and then inquiringly at TANNER.]

The Officer. Who are these men, Señor Ingles?

Tanner. My escort.

[MENDOZA, with a Mephistophelean smile, bows profoundly. An irrepressible grin runs from face to face among the BRIGANDS. They touch their hats, except the ANARCHIST, who defies the State with folded arms.]

ACT IV

The garden of a villa in Granada. Whoever wishes to know what it is like must go to Granada to see. One may prosaically specify a group of hills dotted with villas, the Alhambra on the top of one of the hills, and a considerable town in the valley, approached by dusty white roads in which the children, no matter what they are doing or thinking about, automatically whine for halfpence and reach out little clutching brown palms for them; but there is nothing in this description except the Alhambra, the begging, and the color of the roads, that does not fit Surrey as well as Spain. The difference is that the Surrey hills are comparatively small and ugly, and should properly be called the Surrey Protuberances; but these Spanish hills

are of mountain stock: the amenity which conceals their size does not compromise their dignity.

This particular garden is on a hill opposite the Alhambra; and the villa is as expensive and pretentious as a villa must be if it is to be let furnished by the week to opulent American and English visitors. If we stand on the lawn at the foot of the garden and look uphill, our horizon is the stone balustrade of a flagged platform on the edge of infinite space at the top of the hill. Between us and this platform is a flower garden with a circular basin and fountain in the centre, surrounded by geometrical flower beds, gravel paths, and clipped yew trees in the genteelest order. The garden is higher than our lawn; so we reach it by

a few steps in the middle of its embankment. The platform is higher again than the garden, from which we mount a couple more steps to look over the balustrade at a fine view of the town up the valley and of the hills that stretch away beyond it to where, in the remotest distance, they become mountains. On our left is the villa, accessible by steps from the left hand corner of the garden. Returning from the platform through the garden and down again to the lawn (a movement which leaves the villa behind us on our right) we find evidence of literary interests on the part of the tenants in the fact that there is no tennis net nor set of croquet hoops, but, on our left, a little iron garden table with books on it, mostly yellow-backed, and a chair beside it. A chair on the right has also a couple of open books upon it. There are no newspapers, a circumstance which, with the absence of games, might lead an intelligent spectator to the most far-reaching conclusions as to the sort of people who live in the villa. Such speculations are checked, however, on this delightfully fine afternoon, by the appearance at a little gate in a paling on our left, of HENRY STRAKER in his professional costume. He opens the gate for an ELDERLY GENTLEMAN, and follows him on to the lawn.

This ELDERLY GENTLEMAN defies the Spanish sun in a black frock coat, tall silk hat, trousers in which narrow stripes of dark grey and lilac blend into a highly respectable color, and a black necktie tied into a bow over spotless linen. Probably therefore a man whose social position needs constant and scrupulous affirmation without regard to climate: one who would dress thus for the middle of the Sahara or the top of Mont Blanc. And since he has not the stamp of the class which accepts as its life mission the advertizing and maintenance of first-rate tailoring and millinery, he looks vulgar in his finery, though in a working dress of any kind he would look dignified enough. He is a bullet-cheeked man with a red complexion, stubbly hair, smallish eyes, a hard mouth that folds down at the corners, and a dogged chin. The looseness of skin that comes with age has attacked his throat and the laps of his cheeks; but he is still hard as an apple above the mouth; so that the upper half of his face looks younger than the lower. He has the self-confidence of

one who has made money, and something of the truculence of one who has made it in a brutalizing struggle, his civility having under it a perceptible menace that he has other methods in reserve if necessary. Withal, a man to be rather pitied when he is not to be feared; for there is something pathetic about him at times, as if the huge commercial machine which has worked him into his frock coat had allowed him very little of his own way and left his affections hungry and baffled. At the first word that falls from him it is clear that he is an Irishman whose native intonation has clung to him through many changes of place and rank. One can only guess that the original material of his speech was perhaps the surly Kerry brogue; but the degradation of speech that occurs in London, Glasgow, Dublin, and big cities generally has been at work on it so long that nobody but an arrant cockney would dream of calling it a brogue now; for its music is almost gone, though its surliness is still perceptible. STRAKER, being a very obvious cockney, inspires him with implacable contempt, as a stupid Englishman who cannot even speak his own language properly. STRAKER, on the other hand, regards the OLD GENTLEMAN'S accent as a joke thoughtfully provided by Providence expressly for the amusement of the British race, and treats him normally with the indulgence due to an inferior and unlucky species, but occasionally with indignant alarm when the OLD GENTLEMAN shews signs of intending his Irish nonsense to be taken seriously.

Straker. I'll go tell the young lady. She said you'd prefer to stay here.

[He turns to go up through the garden to the villa.]

The Irishman. [Who had been looking round him with lively curiosity.] The young lady? That's Miss Violet, eh?

Straker. [Stopping on the steps with sudden suspicion.] Well, you know, don't you?

The Irishman. Do I?

Straker. [His temper rising.] Well, do you or don't you?

The Irishman. What business is that of yours?

[STRAKER, now highly indignant, comes back from the steps and confronts the VISITOR.]

Straker. I'll tell you what business it is of mine. Miss Robinson——

The Irishman. [Interrupting.] Oh, her name is Robinson, is it? Thank you.

Straker. Why, you dont know even her name?

The Irishman. Yes I do, now that youve told me.

Straker. [After a moment of stupefaction at the OLD MAN's readiness in repartee.] Look here; what do you mean by gittin into my car and lettin me bring you here if youre not the person I took that note to?

The Irishman. Who else did you take it to, pray?

Straker. I took it to Mr Ector Malone, at Miss Robinson's request, see? Miss Robinson is not my principal: I took it to oblige her. I know Mr. Malone; and he aint you, not by a long chalk. At the hotel they told me that your name is Ector Malone——

Malone. Hector Malone.

Straker. [With calm superiority.] Hector in your own country: thats what comes o livin in provincial places like Ireland and America. Over here youre Ector: if you avnt noticed it before, you soon will.

[The growing strain of the conversation is here relieved by VIOLET, who has sallied from the villa and through the garden to the steps, which she now descends, coming very opportunely between MALONE and STRAKER.]

Violet. [To STRAKER.] Did you take my message?

Straker. Yes, miss. I took it to the hotel and sent it up, expecting to see young Mr Malone. Then out walks this gent, and says it's all right and he'll come with me. So as the hotel people said he was Mr. Ector Malone, I fetched him. And now he goes back on what he said. But if he isnt the gentleman you meant, say the word: it's easy enough to fetch him back again.

Malone. I should esteem it a great favor if I might have a short conversation with you, madam. I am Hector's father, as this bright Britisher would have guessed in the course of another hour or so.

Straker. [Coolly defiant.] No, not in another year or so. When weve ad you as long to polish up as weve ad im, perhaps youll begin to look a little bit up to is mark. At present you fall a long way short. Youve got too many aitches, for one thing. [To VIOLET, amiably.] All right, Miss: you want to talk to him: I shant intrude.

[He nods affably to MALONE and goes out through the little gate in the paling.]

Violet. [Very civilly.] I am sorry, Mr Malone, if that man has been rude to you. But what can we do? He is our chauffeur.

Malone. Your hwat?

Violet. The driver of our automobile. He can drive a motor car at seventy miles an hour, and mend it when it breaks down. We are dependent on our motor cars; and our motor cars are dependent on him; so of course we are dependent on him.

Malone. Ive noticed, madam, that every thousand dollars an Englishman gets seems to add one to the number of people he's dependent on. However, you neednt apologize for your man: I made him talk on purpose. By doing so I learnt that youre staying here in Grannida with a party of English, including my son Hector.

Violet. [Conversationally.] Yes. We intended to go to Nice; but we had to follow a rather eccentric member of our party who started first and came here. Wont you sit down?

[She clears the nearest chair of the two books on it.]

Malone. [Impressed by this attention.] Thank you. [He sits down, examining her curiously as she goes to the iron table to put down the books. When she turns to him again, he says.] Miss Robinson, I believe?

Violet. [Sitting down.] Yes.

Malone. [Taking a letter from his pocket.] Your note to Hector runs as follows. [VIOLET is unable to repress a start. He pauses quietly to take out and put on his spectacles, which have gold rims.] "Dearest: they have all gone to the Alhambra for the afternoon. I have shammed headache and have the garden all to myself. Jump into Jack's motor: Straker will rattle you here in a jiffy. Quick, quick, quick. Your loving Violet." [He looks at her; but by this time she has recovered, and meets his spectacles with perfect composure. He continues slowly.] Now I dont know on hwat terms young people associate in English society; but in America that note would be considered to imply a very considerable degree of affectionate intimacy between the parties.

Violet. Yes: I know your son very well, Mr Malone. Have you any objection?

Malone. [Somewhat taken aback.] No, no objection exactly. Provided it is understood that my son is altogether dependent on me, and that I have to be consulted in any important step he may propose to take.

Violet. I am sure you would not be unreasonable with him, Mr Malone.

Malone. I hope not, Miss Robinson; but at your age you might think many things unreasonable that dont seem so to me.

Violet. [With a little shrug.] Oh, well, I suppose theres no use our playing at cross

purposes, Mr Malone. Hector wants to marry me.

Malone. I inferred from your note that he might. Well, Miss Robinson, he is his own master; but if he marries you he shall not have a rap from me.

[He takes off his spectacles and pockets them with the note.]

Violet. *[With some severity.]* That is not very complimentary to me, Mr Malone.

Malone. I say nothing against you, Miss Robinson: I daresay you are an amiable and excellent young lady. But I have other views for Hector.

Violet. Hector may not have other views for himself, Mr Malone.

Malone. Possibly not. Then he does without me; that's all. I daresay you are prepared for that. When a young lady writes to a young man to come to her quick, quick, quick, money seems nothing and love seems everything.

Violet. *[Sharply.]* I beg your pardon, Mr Malone: I do not think anything so foolish. Hector must have money.

Malone. *[Staggered.]* Oh, very well, very well. No doubt he can work for it.

Violet. What is the use of having money if you have to work for it? *[She rises impatiently.]* It's all nonsense, Mr. Malone: you must enable your son to keep up his position. It is his right.

Malone. *[Grimly.]* I should not advise you to marry him on the strength of that right, Miss Robinson.

[VIOLET, who has almost lost her temper, controls herself with an effort; unclenches her fingers; and resumes her seat with studied tranquillity and reasonableness.]

Violet. What objection have you to me, pray? My social position is as good as Hector's, to say the least. He admits it.

Malone. *[Shrewdly.]* You tell him so from time to time, eh? Hector's social position in England, Miss Robinson, is just what I choose to buy for him. I have made him a fair offer. Let him pick out the most historic house, castle, or abbey that England contains. The very day he tells me he wants it for a wife worthy of its traditions, I buy it for him, and give him the means of keeping it up.

Violet. What do you mean by a wife worthy of its traditions? Cannot any well bred woman keep such a house for him?

Malone. No: she must be born to it.

Violet. Hector was not born to it, was he?

Malone. His grandmother was a barefooted Irish girl that nursed me by a turf fire. Let

him marry another such, and I will not stint her marriage portion. Let him raise himself socially with my money or raise somebody else: so long as there is a social profit somewhere, I'll regard my expenditure as justified. But there must be a profit for someone. A marriage with you would leave things just where they are.

Violet. Many of my relations would object very much to my marrying the grandson of a common woman, Mr Malone. That may be prejudice; but so is your desire to have him marry a title prejudice.

Malone. *[Rising, and approaching her with a scrutiny in which there is a good deal of reluctant respect.]* You seem a pretty straightforward downright sort of a young woman.

Violet. I do not see why I should be made miserably poor because I cannot make profits for you. Why do you want to make Hector unhappy?

Malone. He will get over it right enough. Men thrive better on disappointments in love than disappointments in money. I daresay you think that sordid; but I know what I'm talking about. Me father died of starvation in Ireland in the black 47. Maybe youve heard of it.

Violet. The Famine?

Malone. *[With smouldering passion.]* No, the starvation. When a country is full o food, and exporting it, there can be no famine. Me father was starved dead; and I was starved out to America in me mother's arms. English rule drove me and mine out of Ireland. Well, you can keep Ireland. Me and me like are coming back to buy England; and we'll buy the best of it. I want no middle-class properties and no middle-class women for Hector. Thats straightforward, isnt it, like yourself?

Violet. *[Icily pitying his sentimentality.]* Really, Mr. Malone, I am astonished to hear a man of your age and good sense talking in that romantic way. Do you suppose English noblemen will sell their places to you for the asking?

Malone. I have the refusal of two of the oldest family mansions in England. One historic owner cant afford to keep all the rooms dusted: the other cant afford the death duties. What do you say now?

Violet. Of course it is very scandalous; but surely you know that the Government will sooner or later put a stop to all these Socialistic attacks on property.

Malone. *[Grinning.]* D'y'think they'll be able to get that done before I buy the house—or rather the abbey? Theyre both abbeys.

Violet. [Putting that aside rather impatiently.] Oh, well, let us talk sense, Mr Malone. You must feel that we havnt been talking sense so far.

Malone. I cant say I do. I mean all I say.

Violet. Then you dont know Hector as I do. He is romantic and faddy—he gets it from you, I fancy—and he wants a certain sort of wife to take care of him. Not a faddy sort of person, you know.

Malone. Somebody like you, perhaps?

Violet. [Quietly.] Well, yes. But you cannot very well ask me to undertake this with absolutely no means of keeping up his position.

Malone. [Alarmed.] Stop a bit, stop a bit. Where are we getting to? I'm not aware that I'm asking you to undertake anything.

Violet. Of course, Mr Malone, you can make it very difficult for me to speak to you if you choose to misunderstand me.

Malone. [Half bewildered.] I dont wish to take any unfair advantage; but we seem to have got off the straight track somehow.

[STRAKER, with the air of a man who has been making haste, opens the little gate, and admits HECTOR, who, snorting with indignation, comes upon the lawn, and is making for his FATHER when VIOLET, greatly dismayed, springs up and intercepts him. STRAKER does not wait; at least he does not remain visibly within earshot.]

Violet. Oh, how unlucky! Now please, Hector, say nothing. Go away until I have finished speaking to your father.

Hector. [Inexorably.] No, Violet: I mean to have this thing out, right away. [He puts her aside; passes her by; and faces his FATHER, whose cheeks darken as his Irish blood begins to simmer.] Dad: youve not played this hand straight.

Malone. Hwat d'y'mean?

Hector. Youve opened a letter addressed to me. Youve impersonated me and stolen a march on this lady. Thats disawnerable.

Malone. [Threateningly.] Now you take care what youre saying, Hector. Take care, I tell you.

Hector. I have taken care. I am taking care. I'm taking care of my honor and my position in English society.

Malone. [Hotly.] Your position has been got by my money: do you know that?

Hector. Well, youve just spoiled it all by opening that letter. A letter from an English lady, not addressed to you—a cawnfidential letter! a dullicate letter! a private letter! opened by my father! Thats a sort of thing

a man cant struggle against in England. The sooner we go back together the better.

[He appeals mutely to the heavens to witness the shame and anguish of two outcasts.]

Violet. [Snubbing him with an instinctive dislike for scene making.] Dont be unreasonable, Hector. It was quite natural for Mr Malone to open my letter: his name was on the envelope.

Malone. There! Youve no common sense, Hector. I thank you, Miss Robinson.

Hector. I thank you, too. It's very kind of you. My father knows no better.

Malone. [Furiously clenching his fists.] Hector——

Hector. [With undaunted moral force.] Oh, it's no use hectoring me. A private letter's a private letter, dad: you cant get over that.

Malone. [Raising his voice.] I wont be talked back to by you, d'y'hear?

Violet. Ssh! please, please. Here they all come.

[FATHER and SON, checked, glare mutely at one another as TANNER comes in through the little gate with RAMSDEN, followed by OCTAVIUS and ANN.]

Violet. Back already!

Tanner. The Alhambra is not open this afternoon.

Violet. What a sell.

[TANNER passes on, and presently finds himself between HECTOR and a strange ELDER, both apparently on the verge of personal combat. He looks from one to the other for an explanation. They sulkily avoid his eye, and nurse their wrath in silence.]

Ramsden. Is it wise for you to be out in the sunshine with such a headache, Violet?

Tanner. Have you recovered too, Malone?

Violet. Oh, I forgot. We have not all met before. Mr. Malone: wont you introduce your father?

Hector. [With Roman firmness.] No, I will not. He is no father of mine.

Malone. [Very angry.] You disown your dad before your English friends, do you?

Violet. Oh, please dont make a scene.

[ANN and OCTAVIUS, lingering near the gate, exchange an astonished glance, and discreetly withdraw up the steps to the garden, where they can enjoy the disturbance without intruding. On their way to the steps ANN sends a little grimace of mute sympathy to VIOLET, who is standing with her back to the little table, looking on in helpless annoyance as her husband soars to higher and

higher moral eminences without the least regard to the OLD MAN'S millions.]

Hector. I'm very sorry, Miss Rawbnsn; but I'm contending for a principle. I am a son, and I hope, a dutiful one; but before everything I'm a Mahn!!! And when dad treats my private letters as his own, and takes it on himself to say that I shant marry you if I am happy and fortunate enough to gain your consent, then I just snap my fingers and go my own way.

Tanner. Marry Violet!

Ramsden. Are you in your senses?

Tanner. Do you forget what we told you?

Hector. [*Recklessly.*] I dont care what you told me.

Ramsden. [*Scandalized.*] Tut tut, sir! Monstrous!

[He flings away towards the gate, his elbows quivering with indigation.]

Tanner. Another madman! These men in love should be locked up.

[He gives HECTOR up as hopeless, and turns away towards the garden; but MALONE, taking offence in a new direction, follows him and compels him, by the aggressiveness of his tone, to stop.]

Malone. I don't understand this. Is Hector not good enough for this lady, pray?

Tanner. My dear sir, the lady is married already. Hector knows it; and yet he persists in his infatuation. Take him home and lock him up.

Malone. [*Bitterly.*] So this is the high-born social tone Ive spoilt be me ignorant, uncultivated behavior! Makin love to a married woman! [*He comes angrily between HECTOR and VIOLET, and almost bawls into HECTOR'S left ear.*] Youve picked up that habit of the British aristocracy, have you?

Hector. Thats all right. Dont you trouble yourself about that. I'll answer for the morality of what I'm doing.

Tanner. [*Coming forward to HECTOR'S right hand with flashing eyes.*] Well said, Malone! You also see that mere marriage laws are not morality! I agree with you; but unfortunately Violet does not.

Malone. I take leave to doubt that, sir. [*Turning on VIOLET.*] Let me tell you, Mrs Robinson, or whatever your right name is, you had no right to send that letter to my son when you were the wife of another man.

Hector. [*Outraged.*] This is the last straw. Dad: you have insulted my wife.

Malone. Your wife!

Tanner. You the missing husband! Another moral impostor!

[He smites his brow, and collapses into MALONE'S chair.]

Malone. Youve married without my consent!

Ramsden. You have deliberately humbugged us, sir!

Hector. Here: I have had just enough of being badgered. Violet and I are married: thats the long and short of it. Now what have you got to say—any of you?

Malone. I know what Ive got to say. She's married a beggar.

Hector. No: she's married a Worker. [*His American pronunciation imparts an overwhelming intensity to this simple and unpopular word.*] I start to earn my own living this very afternoon.

Malone. [*Sneering angrily.*] Yes: youre very plucky now, because you got your remittance from me yesterday or this morning, I reckon. Wait! it's spent. You wont be so full of cheek then.

Hector. [*Producing a letter from his pocketbook.*] Here it is. [*Thrusting it on his FATHER.*] Now you just take your remittance and yourself out of my life. I'm done with remittances; and I'm done with you. I dont sell the privilege of insulting my wife for a thousand dollars.

Malone. [*Deeply wounded and full of concern.*] Hector: you dont know what poverty is.

Hector. [*Fervidly.*] Well, I wawnt to know what it is. I wawnt'be a Mahn. Violet, you come along with me, to your own home: I'll see you through.

Octavius. [*Jumping down from the garden to the lawn and running to HECTOR'S left hand.*] I hope youll shake hands with me before you go, Hector. I admire and respect you more than I can say.

[He is affected almost to tears as they shake hands.]

Violet. [*Also almost in tears, but of vexation.*] Oh, dont be an idiot, Tavy. Hector's about as fit to become a workman as you are.

Tanner. [*Rising from his chair on the other side of HECTOR.*] Never fear: theres no question of his becoming a navvy,¹ Mrs Malone. [*To HECTOR.*] Theres really no difficulty about capital to start with. Treat me as a friend: draw on me.

Octavius. [*Impulsively.*] Or on me.

Malone. [*With fierce jealousy.*] Who wants your dirty money? Who should he draw on but his own father? [*TANNER and OCTAVIUS recoil, OCTAVIUS rather hurt, TANNER consoled by the solution of the money difficulty. VIOLET looks up hopefully.*]

¹ Common laborer.

Hector: dont be rash, my boy. I'm sorry for what I said: I never meant to insult Violet: I take it all back. She's just the wife you want: there!

Hector. [*Patting him on the shoulder.*] Well, thats all right, dad. Say no more: we're friends again. Only, I take no money from anybody.

Malone. [*Pleading abjectly.*] Dont be hard on me, Hector. I'd rather you quarrelled and took the money than made friends and starved. You dont know what the world is: I do.

Hector. No, no, NO. Thats fixed: thats not going to change. [*He passes his FATHER inexorably by, and goes to VIOLET.*] Come, Mrs Malone: youve got to move to the hotel with me, and take your proper place before the world.

Violet. But I must go in, dear, and tell Davis to pack. Wont you go on and make them give you a room overlooking the garden for me? I'll join you in half an hour.

Hector. Very well. Youll dine with us, dad, wont you?

Malone. [*Eager to conciliate him.*] Yes, yes.

Hector. See you all later.

[*He waves his hand to ANN, who has now been joined by TANNER, OCTAVIUS, and RAMSDEN in the garden, and goes out through the little gate, leaving his FATHER and VIOLET together on the lawn.*]

Malone. Youll try to bring him to his senses, Violet: I know you will.

Violet. I had no idea he could be so headstrong. If he goes on like that, what can I do?

Malone. Dont be discourridged: domestic pressure may be slow; but it's sure. Youll wear him down. Promise me you will.

Violet. I will do my best. Of course I think it's the greatest nonsense deliberately making us poor like that.

Malone. Of course it is.

Violet. [*After a moment's reflection.*] You had better give me the remittance. He will want it for his hotel bill. I'll see whether I can induce him to accept it. Not now, of course, but presently.

Malone. [*Eagerly.*] Yes, yes, yes: thats just the thing. [*He hands her the thousand dollar bill, and adds cunningly.*] Y'understand that this is only a bachelor allowance.

Violet. [*Coolly.*] Oh, quite. [*She takes it.*] Thank you. By the way, Mr. Malone, those two houses you mentioned—the abbeys.

Malone. Yes?

Violet. Dont take one of them until Ive seen it. One never knows what may be wrong with these places.

Malone. I wont. I'll do nothing without consulting you, never fear.

Violet. [*Politely, but without a ray of gratitude.*] Thanks: that will be much the best way.

[*She goes calmly back to the villa, escorted obsequiously by MALONE to the upper end of the garden.*]

Tanner. [*Drawing RAMSDEN's attention to MALONE's cringing attitude as he takes leave of VIOLET.*] And that poor devil is a billionaire! one of the master spirits of the age! Led in a string like a pug dog by the first girl who takes the trouble to despise him! I wonder will it ever come to that with me. [*He comes down to the lawn.*]

Ramsden. [*Following him.*] The sooner the better for you.

Malone. [*Slapping his hands as he returns through the garden.*] That'll be a grand woman for Hector. I wouldn't exchange her for ten duchesses.

[*He descends to the lawn and comes between TANNER and RAMSDEN.*]

Ramsden. [*Very civil to the BILLIONAIRE.*] It's an unexpected pleasure to find you in this corner of the world, Mr Malone. Have you come to buy up the Alhambra?

Malone. Well, I dont say I mightnt. I think I could do better with it than the Spanish government. But thats not what I came about. To tell you the truth, about a month ago I overheard a deal between two men over a bundle of shares. They differed about the price: they were young and greedy, and didnt know that if the shares were worth what was bid for them they must be worth what was asked, the margin being too small to be of any account, you see. To amuse meself, I cut in and bought the shares. Well, to this day I havnt found out what the business is. The office is in this town; and the name is Mendoza, Limited. Now whether Mendoza's a mine, or a steamboat line, or a bank, or a patent article—

Tanner. He's a man. I know him: his principles are thoroughly commercial. Let us take you round the town in our motor, Mr Malone, and call on him on the way.

Malone. If youll be so kind, yes. And may I ask who—

Tanner. Mr Roebuck Ramsden, a very old friend of your daughter-in-law.

Malone. Happy to meet you, Mr Ramsden.

Ramsden. Thank you. Mr Tanner is also one of our circle.

Malone. Glad to know you also, Mr Tanner.

Tanner. Thanks. [MALONE and RAMSDEN go out very amicably through the little gate. TANNER calls to OCTAVIUS, who is wandering in the garden with ANN.] Tavy! [TAVY comes to the steps, TANNER whispers loudly to him.] Violet's father-in-law is a financier of brigands.

[TANNER hurries away to overtake MALONE and RAMSDEN. ANN strolls to the steps with an idle impulse to torment OCTAVIUS.]

Ann. Wont you go with them, Tavy?

Octavius. [Tears suddenly flushing his eyes.] You cut me to the heart, Ann, by wanting me to go.

[He comes down on the lawn to hide his face from her. She follows him caressingly.]

Ann. Poor Ricky Ticky Tavy! Poor heart!

Octavius. It belongs to you, Ann. Forgive me: I must speak of it. I love you. You know I love you.

Ann. What's the good, Tavy? You know that my mother is determined that I shall marry Jack.

Octavius. [Amazed.] Jack!

Ann. It seems absurd, doesnt it?

Octavius. [With growing resentment.] Do you mean to say that Jack has been playing with me all this time? That he has been urging me not to marry you because he intends to marry you himself?

Ann. [Alarmed.] No, no: you mustnt lead him to believe that I said that. I dont for a moment think that Jack knows his own mind. But it's clear from my father's will that he wished me to marry Jack. And my mother is set on it.

Octavius. But you are not bound to sacrifice yourself always to the wishes of your parents.

Ann. My father loved me. My mother loves me. Surely their wishes are a better guide than my own selfishness.

Octavius. Oh, I know how unselfish you are, Ann. But believe me—though I know I am speaking in my own interest—there is another side to this question. Is it fair to Jack to marry him if you do not love him? Is it fair to destroy my happiness as well as your own if you can bring yourself to love me?

Ann. [Looking at him with a faint impulse of pity.] Tavy, my dear, you are a nice creature—a good boy.

Octavius. [Humiliated.] Is that all?

Ann. [Mischievously in spite of her pity.] Thats a great deal, I assure you. You would always worship the ground I trod on, wouldnt you?

Octavius. I do. It sounds ridiculous; but it's no exaggeration. I do; and I always shall.

Ann. Always is a long word, Tavy. You see, I shall have to live up always to your idea of my divinity; and I dont think I could do that if we were married. But if I marry Jack, youll never be disillusioned—at least not until I grow too old.

Octavius. I too shall grow old, Ann. And when I am eighty, one white hair of the woman I love will make me tremble more than the thickest gold tress from the most beautiful young head.¹

Ann. [Quite touched.] Oh, thats poetry, Tavy, real poetry. It gives me that strange sudden sense of an echo from a former existence which always seems to me such a striking proof that we have immortal souls.

Octavius. Do you believe that it is true?

Ann. Tavy: if it is to come true, you must lose me as well as love me.

Octavius. Oh!

[He hastily sits down at the little table and covers his face with his hands.]

Ann. [With conviction.] Tavy: I wouldnt for worlds destroy your illusions. I can neither take you nor let you go. I can see exactly what will suit you. You must be a sentimental old bachelor for my sake.

Octavius. [Desperately.] Ann: I'll kill myself.

Ann. Oh no, you wont: that wouldnt be kind. You wont have a bad time. You will be very nice to women; and you will go a good deal to the opera. A broken heart is a very pleasant complaint for a man in London if he has a comfortable income.

Octavius. [Considerably cooled, but believing that he is only recovering his self-control.] I know you mean to be kind, Ann. Jack has persuaded you that cynicism is a good tonic for me.

[He rises with quiet dignity.]

Ann. [Studying him slyly.] You see, I'm disillusionizing you already. Thats what I dread.

Octavius. You do not dread disillusionizing Jack.

Ann. [Her face lighting up with mischievous ecstasy—whispering.] I cant: he has no illusions about me. I shall surprise Jack the other way. Getting over an unfavorable im-

¹ See p. 197.

pression is ever so much easier than living up to an ideal. Oh, I shall enrapture Jack sometimes!

Octavius. [*Resuming the calm phase of despair, and beginning to enjoy his broken heart and delicate attitude without knowing it.*] I don't doubt that. You will enrapture him always. And he—the fool!—thinks you would make him wretched.

Ann. Yes: that's the difficulty, so far.

Octavius. [*Heroically.*] Shall I tell him that you love him?

Ann. [*Quickly.*] Oh no: he'd run away again.

Octavius. [*Shocked.*] Ann: would you marry an unwilling man?

Ann. What queer creature you are, Tavy! There's no such thing as a willing man when you really go for him. [*She laughs naughtily.*] I'm shocking you, I suppose. But you know you are really getting a sort of satisfaction already in being out of danger yourself.

Octavius. [*Startled.*] Satisfaction! [*Reproachfully.*] You say that to me!

Ann. Well, if it were really agony, would you ask for more of it?

Octavius. Have I asked for more of it?

Ann. You have offered to tell Jack that I love him. That's self-sacrifice, I suppose; but there must be some satisfaction in it. Perhaps it's because you're a poet. You are like the bird that presses its breast against the sharp thorn to make itself sing.

Octavius. It's quite simple. I love you; and I want you to be happy. You don't love me; so I can't make you happy myself; but I can help another man to do it.

Ann. Yes: it seems quite simple. But I doubt if we ever know why we do things. The only really simple thing is to go straight for what you want and grab it. I suppose I don't love you, Tavy; but sometimes I feel as if I should like to make a man of you somehow. You are very foolish about women.

Octavius. [*Almost coldly.*] I am content to be what I am in that respect.

Ann. Then you must keep away from them, and only dream about them. I wouldn't marry you for worlds, Tavy.

Octavius. I have no hope, Ann: I accept my ill luck. But I don't think you quite know how much it hurts.

Ann. You are so softhearted! It's queer that you should be so different from Violet. Violet's as hard as nails.

Octavius. Oh no. I am sure Violet is thoroughly womanly at heart.

Ann. [*With some impatience.*] Why do you say that? Is it unwomanly to be

thoughtful and businesslike and sensible? Do you want Violet to be an idiot—or something worse, like me?

Octavius. Something worse—like you! What do you mean, Ann?

Ann. Oh well, I don't mean that, of course. But I have a great respect for Violet. She gets her own way always.

Octavius. [*Sighing.*] So do you.

Ann. Yes; but somehow she gets it without coaxing—without having to make people sentimental about her.

Octavius. [*With brotherly callousness.*] Nobody could get very sentimental about Violet, I think, pretty as she is.

Ann. Oh yes they could, if she made them.

Octavius. But surely no really nice woman would deliberately practice on men's instincts in that way.

Ann. [*Throwing up her hands.*] Oh, Tavy, Tavy, Ricky Ticky Tavy, heaven help the woman who marries you!

Octavius. [*His passion reviving at the name.*] Oh why, why, why do you say that? Don't torment me. I don't understand.

Ann. Suppose she were to tell fibs, and lay snares for men?

Octavius. Do you think I could marry such a woman—I, who have known and loved you?

Ann. Hm! Well, at all events, she wouldn't let you if she were wise. So that's settled. And now I can't talk any more. Say you forgive me, and that the subject is closed.

Octavius. I have nothing to forgive; and the subject is closed. And if the wound is open, at least you shall never see it bleed.

Ann. Poetic to the last, Tavy. Goodbye, dear.

[*She pats his cheek; has an impulse to kiss him and then another impulse of distaste which prevents her; finally runs away through the garden and into the villa.* OCTAVIUS again takes refuge at the table, bowing his head on his arms and sobbing softly. MRS WHITEFIELD, who has been pottering round the Granada shops and has a net full of little parcels in her hand, comes in through the gate and sees him.]

Mrs Whitefield. [*Running to him and lifting his head.*] What's the matter, Tavy? Are you ill?

Octavius. No, nothing, nothing.

Mrs Whitefield. [*Still holding his head, anxiously.*] But you're crying. Is it about Violet's marriage?

Octavius. No, no. Who told you about Violet?

Mrs Whitefield. [*Restoring the head to its*

owner.] I met Roebuck and that awful old Irishman. Are you sure you're not ill? Whats the matter?

Octavius. [*Affectionately.*] It's nothing. Only a man's broken heart. Doesnt that sound ridiculous?

Mrs Whitefield. But what is it all about? Has Ann been doing anything to you?

Octavius. It's not Ann's fault. And dont think for a moment that I blame you.

Mrs Whitefield. [*Startled.*] For what?

Octavius. [*Pressing her hand consolingly.*] For nothing. I said I didn't blame you.

Mrs Whitefield. But I havnt done anything. Whats the matter?

Octavius. [*Smiling sadly.*] Cant you guess? I daresay you are right to prefer Jack to me as a husband for Ann; but I love Ann; and it hurts rather.

[*He rises and moves away from her towards the middle of the lawn.*]

Mrs Whitefield. [*Following him hastily.*] Does Ann say that I want her to marry Jack?

Octavius. Yes, she has told me.

Mrs Whitefield. [*Thoughtfully.*] Then I'm very sorry for you, Tavy. It's only her way of saying she wants to marry Jack. Little she cares what I say or what I want!

Octavius. But she would not say it unless she believed it. Surely you dont suspect Ann of—of deceit!!

Mrs Whitefield. Well, never mind, Tavy. I dont know which is best for a young man: to know too little, like you, or too much, like Jack.

[*TANNER returns.*]

Tanner. Well, Ive disposed of old Malone. Ive introduced him to Mendoza, Limited; and left the two brigands together to talk it out. Hullo, Tavy! anything wrong?

Octavius. I must go wash my face, I see. [*To MRS WHITEFIELD.*] Tell him what you wish. [*To TANNER.*] You may take it from me, Jack, that Ann approves of it.

Tanner. [*Puzzled by his manner.*] Approves of what?

Octavius. Of what Mrs Whitefield wishes.

[*He goes his way with sad dignity to the villa.*]

Tanner. [*To MRS WHITEFIELD.*] This is very mysterious. What is it you wish? It shall be done, whatever it is.

Mrs Whitefield. [*With snivelling gratitude.*] Thank you, Jack. [*She sits down. TANNER brings the other chair from the table and sits close to her with his elbows on his knees, giving her his whole attention.*] I dont know why it is that other people's children are so nice to me, and that my own have so little consideration of me. It's no

wonder I dont seem able to care for Ann and Rhoda as I do for you and Tavy and Violet. It's a very queer world. It used to be so straightforward and simple; and now nobody seems to think and feel as they ought. Nothing has been right since that speech that Professor Tyndall made at Belfast.¹

Tanner. Yes: life is more complicated than we used to think. But what am I to do for you?

Mrs Whitefield. Thats just what I want to tell you. Of course you'll marry Ann whether I like it or not—

Tanner. [*Starting.*] It seems to me that I shall presently be married to Ann whether I like it myself or not.

Mrs Whitefield. [*Peacefully.*] Oh, very likely you will: you know what she is when she has set her mind on anything. But dont put it on me: thats all I ask. Tavy has just let out that she's been saying that I am making her marry you; and the poor boy is breaking his heart about it; for he is in love with her himself, though what he sees in her so wonderful, goodness knows: I dont. It's no use telling Tavy that Ann puts things into people's heads by telling them that I want them when the thought of them never crossed my mind. It only sets Tavy against me. But you know better than that. So if you marry her, dont put the blame on me.

Tanner. [*Emphatically.*] I havnt the slightest intention of marrying her.

Mrs Whitefield. [*Slyly.*] She'd suit you better than Tavy. She'd meet her match in you, Jack. I'd like to see her meet her match.

Tanner. No man is a match for a woman, except with a poker and a pair of hobnailed boots. Not always even then. Anyhow, I cant take the poker to her. I should be a mere slave.

Mrs Whitefield. No: she's afraid of you. At all events, you would tell her the truth about herself. She wouldnt be able to slip out of it as she does with me.

Tanner. Everybody would call me a brute if I told Ann the truth about herself in terms of her own moral code. To begin with, Ann says things that are not strictly true.

Mrs Whitefield. I'm glad somebody sees she is not an angel.

Tanner. In short—to put it as a husband would put it when exasperated to the point of speaking out—she is a liar. And since she has plunged Tavy head over ears in love with her without any intention of marrying him, she is a coquette, according to the

¹ As president of the British Association, John Tyndall spoke on science and religion in 1874.

standard definition of a coquette as a woman who rouses passions she has no intention of gratifying. And as she has now reduced you to the point of being willing to sacrifice me at the altar for the mere satisfaction of getting me to call her a liar to her face, I may conclude that she is a bully as well. She cant bully men as she bullies women; so she habitually and unscrupulously uses her personal fascination to make men give her whatever she wants. That makes her almost something for which I know no polite name.

Mrs Whitefield. [*In mild expostulation.*] Well, you cant expect perfection, Jack.

Tanner. I dont. But what annoys me is that Ann does. I know perfectly well that all this about her being a liar and a bully and a coquette and so forth is a trumped-up moral indictment which might be brought against anybody. We all lie; we all bully as much as we dare; we all bid for admiration without the least intention of earning it; we all get as much rent as we can out of our powers of fascination. If Ann would admit this I shouldnt quarrel with her. But she wont. If she has children she'll take advantage of their telling lies to amuse herself by whacking them. If another woman makes eyes at me, she'll refuse to know a coquette. She will do just what she likes herself whilst insisting on everybody else doing what the conventional code prescribes. In short, I can stand everything except her confounded hypocrisy. Thats what beats me.

Mrs Whitefield. [*Carried away by the relief of hearing her own opinion so eloquently expressed.*] Oh, she is a hypocrite. She is: she is. Isnt she?

Tanner. Then why do you want to marry me to her?

Mrs Whitefield. [*Querulously.*] There now! put it on me, of course. I never thought of it until Tavy told me she said I did. But, you know, I'm very fond of Tavy; he's a sort of son to me; and I dont want him to be trampled on and made wretched.

Tanner. Whereas I dont matter, I suppose.

Mrs Whitefield. Oh, you are different, somehow: you are able to take care of yourself. Youd serve her out. And anyhow, she must marry somebody.

Tanner. Aha! there speaks the life instinct. You detest her; but you feel that you must get her married.

Mrs Whitefield. [*Rising, shocked.*] Do you mean that I detest my own daughter? Surely you dont believe me to be so wicked and unnatural as that, merely because I see her faults.

Tanner. [*Cynically.*] You love her then?
Mrs Whitefield. Why, of course I do. What queer things you say, Jack! We cant help loving our own blood relations.

Tanner. Well, perhaps it saves unpleasantness to say so. But for my part, I suspect that the tables of consanguinity have a natural basis in a natural repugnance.

[*He rises.*]

Mrs Whitefield. You shouldnt say things like that, Jack. I hope you wont tell Ann that I have been speaking to you. I only wanted to set myself right with you and Tavy. I couldnt sit mumchance and have everything put on me.

Tanner. [*Politely.*] Quite so.

Mrs Whitefield. [*Dissatisfied.*] And now Ive only made matters worse. Tavy's angry with me because I dont worship Ann. And when it's been put into my head that Ann ought to marry you, what can I say except that it would serve her right?

Tanner. Thank you.

Mrs Whitefield. Now dont be silly and twist what I say into something I dont mean. I ought to have fair play——

[*ANN comes from the villa, followed presently by VIOLET, who is dressed for driving.*]

Ann. [*Coming to her MOTHER'S right hand with threatening suavity.*] Well, mamma darling, you seem to be having a delightful chat with Jack. We can hear you all over the place.

Mrs Whitefield. [*Appalled.*] Have you overheard——

Tanner. Never fear: Ann is only——well, we were discussing that habit of hers just now. She hasnt heard a word.

Mrs Whitefield. [*Stoutly.*] I dont care whether she has or not: I have a right to say what I please.

Violet. [*Arriving on the lawn and coming between MRS WHITEFIELD and TANNER.*] Ive come to say goodbye. I'm off for my honeymoon.

Mrs Whitefield. [*Crying.*] Oh, dont say that, Violet. And no wedding, no breakfast, no clothes, nor anything.

Violet. [*Petting her.*] It wont be for long.

Mrs Whitefield. Dont let him take you to America. Promise me that you wont.

Violet. [*Very decidedly.*] I should think not, indeed. Dont cry, dear: I'm only going to the hotel.

Mrs Whitefield. But going in that dress, with your luggage, makes one realize——
[*She chokes, and then breaks out again.*]
How I wish you were my daughter, Violet!

Violet. [*Soothing her.*] There, there: so I am. Ann will be jealous.

Mrs Whitefield. Ann doesn't care a bit for me.

Ann. Fie, mother! Come, now: you mustn't cry any more: you know Violet doesn't like it.

[*MRS WHITEFIELD dries her eyes, and subsides.*]

Violet. Goodbye, Jack.

Tanner. Goodbye, Violet.

Violet. The sooner you get married too, the better. You will be much less misunderstood.

Tanner. [*Restively.*] I quite expect to get married in the course of the afternoon. You all seem to have set your minds on it.

Violet. You might do worse. [*To MRS WHITEFIELD: putting her arm round her.*] Let me take you to the hotel with me: the drive will do you good. Come in and get a wrap. [*She takes her towards the villa.*]

Mrs Whitefield. [*As they go up through the garden.*] I don't know what I shall do when you are gone, with no one but Ann in the house; and she always occupied with the men! It's not to be expected that your husband will care to be bothered with an old woman like me. Oh, you needn't tell me: politeness is all very well; but I know what people think—

[*She talks herself and VIOLET out of sight and hearing. ANN, alone with TANNER, watches him and waits. He makes an irresolute movement towards the gate; but some magnetism in her draws him to her, a broken man.*]

Ann. Violet is quite right. You ought to get married.

Tanner. [*Explosively.*] Ann: I will not marry you. Do you hear? I won't, won't, won't, won't, WONT marry you.

Ann. [*Placidly.*] Well, nobody and you, sir she said, sir she said, sir she said. So that's settled.

Tanner. Yes, nobody has asked me; but everybody treats the thing as settled. It's in the air. When we meet, the others go away on absurd pretexts to leave us alone together. Ramsden no longer scowls at me: his eye beams, as if he were already giving you away to me in church. Tavy refers me to your mother and gives me his blessing. Straker openly treats you as his future employer: it was he who first told me of it.

Ann. Was that why you ran away?

Tanner. Yes, only to be stopped by a lovesick brigand and run down like a truant schoolboy.

Ann. Well, if you don't want to be married, you needn't be.

[*She turns away from him and sits down, much at her ease.*]

Tanner. [*Following her.*] Does any man want to be hanged? Yet men let themselves be hanged without a struggle for life, though they could at least give the chaplain a black eye. We do the world's will, not our own. I have a frightful feeling that I shall let myself be married because it is the world's will that you should have a husband.

Ann. I daresay I shall, someday.

Tanner. But why me? me of all men! Marriage is to me apostasy, profanation of the sanctuary of my soul, violation of my manhood, sale of my birthright, shameful surrender, ignominious capitulation, acceptance of defeat. I shall decay like a thing that has served its purpose and is done with; I shall change from a man with a future to a man with a past; I shall see in the greasy eyes of all the other husbands their relief at the arrival of a new prisoner to share their ignominy. The young men will scorn me as one who has sold out: to the women I, who have always been an enigma and a possibility, shall be merely somebody else's property—and damaged goods at that: a second-hand man at best.

Ann. Well, your wife can put on a cap and make herself ugly to keep you in countenance, like my grandmother.

Tanner. So that she may make her triumph more insolent by publicly throwing away the bait the moment the trap snaps on the victim!

Ann. After all, though, what difference would it make? Beauty is all very well at first sight; but who ever looks at it when it has been in the house three days? I thought our pictures very lovely when papa bought them; but I haven't looked at them for years. You never bother about my looks: you are too well used to me. I might be the umbrella stand.

Tanner. You lie, you vampire: you lie.

Ann. Flatterer. Why are you trying to fascinate me, Jack, if you don't want to marry me?

Tanner. The Life Force. I am in the grip of the Life Force.

Ann. I don't understand in the least: it sounds like the Life Guards.

Tanner. Why don't you marry Tavy? He is willing. Can you not be satisfied unless your prey struggles?

Ann. [*Turning to him as if to let him into a secret.*] Tavy will never marry.

Havnt you noticed that that sort of man never marries?

Tanner. What! a man who idolizes women! who sees nothing in nature but romantic scenery for love duets! Tavy, the chivalrous, the faithful, the tenderhearted and true! Tavy never marry! Why, he was born to be swept up by the first pair of blue eyes he meets in the street.

Ann. Yes, I know. All the same, Jack, men like that always live in comfortable bachelor lodgings with broken hearts, and are adored by their landladies, and never get married. Men like you always get married.

Tanner. [*Smiting his brow.*] How frightfully, horribly true! It has been staring me in the face all my life; and I never saw it before.

Ann. Oh, it's the same with women. The poetic temperament's a very nice temperament, very amiable, very harmless and poetic, I daresay; but it's an old maid's temperament.

Tanner. Barren. The Life Force passes it by.

Ann. If thats what you mean by the Life Force, yes.

Tanner. You dont care for Tavy?

Ann. [*Looking round carefully to make sure that TAVY is not within earshot.*] No.

Tanner. And you do care for me?

Ann. [*Rising quietly and shaking her finger at him.*] Now, Jack! Behave yourself.

Tanner. Infamous, abandoned woman! Devil!

Ann. Boa-constrictor! Elephant!

Tanner. Hypocrite!

Ann. [*Softly.*] I must be, for my future husband's sake.

Tanner. For mine! [*Correcting himself savagely.*] I mean for his.

Ann. [*Ignoring the correction.*] Yes, for yours. You had better marry what you call a hypocrite, Jack. Women who are not hypocrites go about in rational dress and are insulted and get into all sorts of hot water. And then their husbands get dragged in too, and live in continual dread of fresh complications. Wouldnt you prefer a wife you could depend on?

Tanner. No: a thousand times no: hot water is the revolutionist's element. You clean men as you clean milkpails, by scalding them.

Ann. Cold water has its uses too. It's healthy.

Tanner. [*Despairingly.*] Oh, you are

witty: at the supreme moment the Life Force endows you with every quality. Well, I too can be a hypocrite. Your father's will appointed me your guardian, not your suitor. I shall be faithful to my trust.

Ann. [*In low siren tones.*] He asked me who I would have as my guardian before he made that will. I chose you!

Tanner. The will is yours then! The trap was laid from the beginning.

Ann. [*Concentrating all her magic.*] From the beginning—from our childhood—for both of us—by the Life Force.

Tanner. I will not marry you. I will not marry you.

Ann. Oh, you will, you will.

Tanner. I tell you, no, no, no.

Ann. I tell you, yes, yes, yes.

Tanner. No.

Ann. [*Coaxing—imploring—almost exhausted.*] Yes. Before it is too late for repentance. Yes.

Tanner. [*Struck by the echo from the past.*] When did all this happen to me before? Are we two dreaming?

Ann. [*Suddenly losing her courage, with an anguish that she does not conceal.*] No. We are awake; and you have said no: that is all.

Tanner. [*Brutally.*] Well?

Ann. Well, I made a mistake: you do not love me.

Tanner. [*Seizing her in his arms.*] It is false. I love you. The Life Force enchants me. I have the whole world in my arms when I clasp you. But I am fighting for my freedom, for my honor, for my self, one and indivisible.

Ann. Your happiness will be worth them all.

Tanner. You would sell freedom and honor and self for happiness?

Ann. It will not be all happiness for me. Perhaps death.

Tanner. [*Groaning.*] Oh, that clutch holds and hurts. What have you grasped in me? Is there a father's heart as well as a mother's?

Ann. Take care, Jack: if anyone comes while we are like this, you will have to marry me.

Tanner. If we two stood now on the edge of a precipice, I would hold you tight and jump.

Ann. [*Panting, failing more and more under the strain.*] Jack: let me go. I have dared so frightfully—it is lasting longer than I thought. Let me go: I can't bear it.

Tanner. Nor I. Let it kill us.

Ann. Yes: I don't care. I am at the end of my forces. I don't care. I think I am going to faint.

[At this moment VIOLET and OCTAVIUS come from the villa with MRS WHITEFIELD, who is wrapped up for driving. Simultaneously MALONE and RAMSDEN, followed by MENDOZA and STRAKER, come in through the little gate in the paling. TANNER shamefacedly releases ANN, who raises her hand giddily to her forehead.]

Malone. Take care. Something's the matter with the lady.

Ramsden. What does this mean?

Violet. [Running between ANN and TANNER.] Are you ill?

Ann. [Reeling, with a supreme effort.] I have promised to marry Jack.

[She swoons. VIOLET kneels by her and chafes her hand. TANNER runs round to her other hand, and tries to lift her head. OCTAVIUS goes to VIOLET's assistance, but does not know what to do. MRS WHITEFIELD hurries back into the villa. OCTAVIUS, MALONE, and RAMSDEN run to ANN and crowd round her, stooping to assist. STRAKER coolly comes to ANN's feet, and MENDOZA to her head, both upright and self-possessed.]

Straker. Now then, ladies and gentlemen: she don't want a crowd round her: she wants air—all the air she can git. If you please, gents— [MALONE and RAMSDEN allow him to drive them gently past ANN and up to the lawn towards the garden, where OCTAVIUS, who has already become conscious of his uselessness, joins them. STRAKER, following them up, pauses for a moment to instruct TANNER.] Don't lift er ed, Mr Tanner: let it go flat so's the blood can run back into it.

Mendoza. He is right, Mr Tanner. Trust to the air of the Sierra.

[He withdraws delicately to the garden steps.]

Tanner. [Rising.] I yield to your superior knowledge of physiology, Henry.

[He withdraws to the corner of the lawn; and OCTAVIUS immediately hurries down to him.]

Tavy. [Aside to TANNER, grasping his hand.] Jack: be very happy.

Tanner. [Aside to TAVY.] I never asked her. It is a trap for me.

[He goes up the lawn towards the garden. OCTAVIUS remains petrified.]

Mendoza. [Intercepting MRS WHITE-

FIELD, who comes from the villa with a glass of brandy.] What is this, madam?

[He takes it from her.]

Mrs Whitefield. A little brandy.

Mendoza. The worst thing you could give her. Allow me. [He swallows it.] Trust to the air of the Sierra, madam.

[For a moment the MEN all forget ANN and stare at MENDOZA.]

Ann. [In VIOLET's ear, clutching her round the neck.] Violet: did Jack say anything when I fainted?

Violet. No.

Ann. Ah!

[With a sigh of intense relief she relapses.]

Mrs Whitefield. Oh, she's fainted again.

[They are about to rush back to her; but MENDOZA stops them with a warning gesture.]

Ann. [Supine.] No, I havnt. I'm quite happy.

Tanner. [Suddenly walking determinedly to her, and snatching her hand from VIOLET to feel her pulse.] Why, her pulse is positively bounding. Come! get up. What nonsense! Up with you.

[He hauls her up summarily.]

Ann. Yes: I feel strong enough now. But you very nearly killed me, Jack, for all that.

Malone. A rough wooer, eh? They're the best sort, Miss Whitefield. I congratulate Mr Tanner; and I hope to meet you and him as frequent guests at the abbey.

Ann. Thank you. [She goes past MALONE to OCTAVIUS.] Ricky Ticky Tavy: congratulate me. [Aside to him.] I want to make you cry for the last time.

Tavy. [Steadfastly.] No more tears. I am happy in your happiness. And I believe in you in spite of everything. •

Ramsden. [Coming between MALONE and TANNER.] You are a happy man, Jack Tanner. I envy you.

Mendoza. [Advancing between VIOLET and TANNER.] Sir: there are two tragedies in life. One is to lose your heart's desire. The other is to gain it.¹ Mine and yours, sir.

Tanner. Mr Mendoza: I have no heart's desires. Ramsden: it is very easy for you to call me a happy man: you are only a spectator. I am one of the principals; and I know better. Ann: stop tempting Tavy, and come back to me.

¹ "In this world there are only two tragedies. One is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it." Dumbly in Act III of Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892).

Ann. [*Complying.*] You are absurd, Jack.

[*She takes his offered arm.*]

Tanner. [*Continuing.*] I solemnly say that I am not a happy man. Ann looks happy; but she is only triumphant, successful, victorious. That is not happiness, but the price for which the strong sell their happiness. What we have both done this afternoon is to renounce happiness, renounce freedom, renounce tranquillity, above all, renounce the romantic possibilities of an unknown future, for the cares of a household and a family. I beg that no man may seize the occasion to get half drunk and utter imbecile speeches and coarse pleasantries at my expense. We propose to furnish our own house according to our own taste; and I hereby give notice that the seven or eight travelling clocks, the four or five dressing

cases, the carvers and fish slicers, the copies of Patmore's *Angel In The House* in extra morocco, and the other articles you are preparing to heap upon us, will be instantly sold, and the proceeds devoted to circulating free copies of the *Revolutionist's Handbook*. The wedding will take place three days after our return to England, by special licence, at the office of the district superintendent registrar, in the presence of my solicitor and his clerk, who, like his clients, will be in ordinary walking dress——

Violet. [*With intense conviction.*] You are a brute, Jack.

Ann. [*Looking at him with fond pride and caressing his arm.*] Never mind her, dear. Go on talking.

Tanner. Talking! [*Universal laughter.*]

THE REVOLUTIONIST'S HANDBOOK AND POCKET COMPANION

By
JOHN TANNER, M.I.R.C.
(*Member of the Idle Rich Class*)

PREFACE TO THE REVOLUTIONIST'S HANDBOOK

"No one can contemplate the present condition of the masses of the people without desiring something like a revolution for the better." SIR ROBERT GIFFEN: *Essays in Finance*, vol. ii. p. 393.

FOREWORD

A REVOLUTIONIST IS ONE WHO DESIRES to discard the existing social order and try another.

The constitution of England is revolutionary. To a Russian or Anglo-Indian bureaucrat, a general election is as much a revolution as a referendum or plebiscite in which the people fight instead of voting. The French Revolution overthrew one set of rulers and substituted another with different interests and different views. That is what a general election enables the people to do in England every seven years if they choose. Revolution is therefore a national institution in England; and its advocacy by an Englishman needs no apology.

Every man is a revolutionist concerning the thing he understands. For example, every person who has mastered a profession is a sceptic concerning it, and consequently a revolutionist.

Every genuine religious person is a heretic and therefore a revolutionist.

All who achieve real distinction in life begin as revolutionists. The most distinguished persons become more revolutionary as they grow older, though they are commonly supposed to become more conservative owing to

their loss of faith in conventional methods of reform.

Any person under the age of thirty, who, having any knowledge of the existing social order, is not a revolutionist, is an inferior.

AND YET

Revolutions have never lightened the burden of tyranny: they have only shifted it to another shoulder.

JOHN TANNER.

THE REVOLUTIONIST'S HANDBOOK

I

ON GOOD BREEDING

IF THERE WERE NO GOD, SAID THE EIGHTEENTH century Deist, it would be necessary to invent Him. Now this XVIII century god was *deus ex machina*, the god who helped those who could not help themselves, the god of the lazy and incapable. The nineteenth century decided that there is indeed no such god; and now Man must take in hand all the work that he used to shirk with an idle prayer. He must, in effect, change himself into the political Providence which he formerly conceived as god; and such change is not only possible, but the only sort of change that is real. The mere transfiguration of institutions, as from military and priestly dominance to commercial and scientific dominance, from commercial dominance to proletarian democracy, from slavery to serfdom, from serfdom to capitalism, from monarchy to republicanism,

from polytheism to monotheism, from monotheism to atheism, from atheism to pantheistic humanitarianism, from general illiteracy to general literacy, from romance to realism, from realism to mysticism, from metaphysics to physics, are all but changes from Tweedledum to Tweedledee: *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*.¹ But the changes from the crab apple to the pippin, from the wolf and fox to the house dog, from the charger of Henry V to the brewer's draught horse and the racehorse, are real; for here Man has played the god, subduing Nature to his intention, and ennobling or debasing Life for a set purpose. And what can be done with a wolf can be done with a man. If such monsters as the tramp and the gentleman can appear as mere by-products of Man's individual greed and folly, what might we not hope for as a main product of his universal aspiration?

This is no new conclusion. The despair of institutions, and the inexorable "ye must be born again," with Mrs Poyser's² stipulation, "and born different," recurs in every generation. The cry for the Superman did not begin with Nietzsche, nor will it end with his vogue. But it has always been silenced by the same question: what kind of person is this Superman to be? You ask, not for a super-apple, but for an eatable apple; not for a super-horse, but for a horse of greater draught or velocity. Neither is it of any use to ask for a Superman: you must furnish a specification of the sort of man you want. Unfortunately you do not know what sort of man you want. Some sort of good-looking philosopher-athlete, with a handsome healthy woman for his mate, perhaps.

Vague as this is, it is a great advance on the popular demand for a perfect gentleman and a perfect lady. And, after all, no market demand in the world takes the form of exact technical specification of the article required. Excellent poultry and potatoes are produced to satisfy the demand of housewives who do not know the technical differences between a tuber and a chicken. They will tell you that the proof of the pudding is in the eating; and they are right. The proof of the Superman will be in the living; and we shall find out how to produce him by the old method of trial and error, and not by waiting for a completely convincing prescription of his ingredients.

Certain common and obvious mistakes may be ruled out from the beginning. For ex-

ample, we agree that we want superior mind; but we need not fall into the football club folly of counting on this as a product of superior body. Yet if we recoil so far as to conclude that superior mind consists in being the dupe of our ethical classifications of virtues and vices, in short, of conventional morality, we shall fall out of the frying-pan of the football club into the fire of the Sunday School. If we must choose between a race of athletes and a race of "good" men, let us have the athletes: better Samson and Milo¹ than Calvin and Robespierre. But neither alternative is worth changing for: Samson is no more a Superman than Calvin. What then are we to do?

II

PROPERTY AND MARRIAGE

Let us hurry over the obstacles set up by property and marriage. Revolutionists make too much of them. No doubt it is easy to demonstrate that property will destroy society unless society destroys it. No doubt, also, property has hitherto held its own and destroyed all the empires. But that was because the superficial objection to it (that it distributes social wealth and the social labor burden in a grotesquely inequitable manner) did not threaten the existence of the race, but only the individual happiness of its units, and finally the maintenance of some irrelevant political form or other, such as a nation, an empire, or the like. Now as happiness never matters to Nature, as she neither recognizes flags and frontiers nor cares a straw whether the economic system adopted by a society is feudal, capitalistic, or collectivist, provided it keeps the race afoot (the hive and the anthill being as acceptable to her as Utopia), the demonstrations of Socialists, though irrefutable, will never make any serious impressions on property. The knell of that overrated institution will not sound until it is felt to conflict with some more vital matter than mere personal inequities in industrial economy. No such conflict was perceived whilst society had not yet grown beyond national communities too small and simple to overtax Man's limited political capacity disastrously. But we have now reached the stage of international organization. Man's political capacity and magnanimity are clearly beaten by the vastness and complexity of the problems forced on him. And it is at this anxious mo-

¹ "The more it changes, the more it remains the same."

² In George Eliot's *Adam Bede*.

¹ Milo of Crotona, six times champion wrestler at the Olympic Games in the sixth century B. C.

ment that he finds, when he looks upward for a mightier mind to help him, that the heavens are empty. He will presently see that his discarded formula that Man is the Temple of the Holy Ghost happens to be precisely true, and that it is only through his own brain and hand that this Holy Ghost, formally the most nebulous person in the Trinity, and now become its sole survivor as it has always been its real Unity, can help him in any way. And so, if the Superman is to come, he must be born of Woman by Man's intentional and well-considered contrivance. Conviction of this will smash everything that opposes it. Even Property and Marriage, which laugh at the laborer's petty complaint that he is defrauded of "surplus value," and at the domestic miseries of the slaves of the wedding ring, will themselves be laughed aside as the lightest of trifles if they cross this conception when it becomes a fully realized vital purpose of the race.

That they must cross it becomes obvious the moment we acknowledge the futility of breeding men for special qualities as we breed cocks for game, greyhounds for speed, or sheep for mutton. What is really important in Man is the part of him that we do not yet understand. Of much of it we are not even conscious, just as we are not normally conscious of keeping up our circulation by our heart-pump, though if we neglect it we die. We are therefore driven to the conclusion that when we have carried selection as far as we can by rejecting from the list of eligible parents all persons who are uninteresting, unpromising, or blemished without any set-off, we shall still have to trust to the guidance of fancy (*alias* Voice of Nature), both in the breeders and the parents, for that superiority in the unconscious self which will be the true characteristic of the Superman.

At this point we perceive the importance of giving fancy the widest possible field. To cut humanity up into small cliques, and effectively limit the selection of the individual to his own clique, is to postpone the Superman for eons, if not forever. Not only should every person be nourished and trained as a possible parent, but there should be no possibility of such an obstacle to natural selection as the objection of a countess to a navvy or of a duke to a charwoman. Equality is essential to good breeding; and equality, as all economists know, is incompatible with property.

Besides, equality is an essential condition of bad breeding also; and bad breeding is

indispensable to the weeding out of the human race. When the conception of heredity took hold of the scientific imagination in the middle of last century, its devotees announced that it was a crime to marry the lunatic to the lunatic or the consumptive to the consumptive. But pray are we to try to correct our diseased stocks by infecting our healthy stocks with them? Clearly the attraction which disease has for diseased people is beneficial to the race. If two really unhealthy people get married, they will, as likely as not, have a great number of children who will all die before they reach maturity. This is a far more satisfactory arrangement than the tragedy of a union between a healthy and an unhealthy person. Though more costly than sterilization of the unhealthy, it has the enormous advantage that in the event of our notions of health and unhealth being erroneous (which to some extent they most certainly are), the error will be corrected by experience instead of confirmed by evasion.

One fact must be faced resolutely, in spite of the shrieks of the romantic. There is no evidence that the best citizens are the offspring of congenial marriages, or that a conflict of temperament is not a highly important part of what breeders call crossing. On the contrary, it is quite sufficiently probable that good results may be obtained from parents who would be extremely unsuitable companions and partners, to make it certain that the experiment of mating them will sooner or later be tried purposely almost as often as it is now tried accidentally. But mating such couples must clearly not involve marrying them. In conjugation two complementary persons may supply one another's deficiencies: in the domestic partnership of marriage they only feel them and suffer from them. Thus the son of a robust, cheerful, eupeptic British country squire, with the tastes and range of his class, and of a clever, imaginative, intellectual, highly civilized Jewess, might be very superior to both his parents; but it is not likely that the Jewess would find the squire an interesting companion, or his habits, his friends, his place and mode of life congenial to her. Therefore marriage, whilst it is made an indispensable condition of mating, will delay the advent of the Superman as effectually as Property, and will be modified by the impulse towards him just as effectually.

The practical abrogation of Property and Marriage as they exist at present will occur without being much noticed. To the mass of men, the intelligent abolition of property

would mean nothing except an increase in the quantity of food, clothing, housing, and comfort at their personal disposal, as well as a greater control over their time and circumstances. Very few persons now make any distinction between virtually complete property and property held on such highly developed public conditions as to place its income on the same footing as that of a propertyless clergyman, officer, or civil servant. A landed proprietor may still drive men and women off his land, demolish their dwellings, and replace them with sheep or deer; and in the unregulated trades the private trader may still sponge on the regulated trades and sacrifice the life and health of the nation as lawlessly as the Manchester cotton manufacturers did at the beginning of last century. But though the Factory Code on the one hand, and Trade Union organization on the other, have, within the lifetime of men still living, converted the old unrestricted property of the cotton manufacturer in his mill and the cotton spinner in his labor into a mere permission to trade or work on stringent public or collective conditions, imposed in the interest of the general welfare without any regard for individual hard cases, people in Lancashire still speak of their "property" in the old terms, meaning nothing more by it than the things a thief can be punished for stealing. The total abolition of property, and the conversion of every citizen into a salaried functionary in the public service, would leave much more than 99 per cent of the nation quite unconscious of any greater change than now takes place when the son of a ship-owner goes into the navy. They would still call their watches and umbrellas and back gardens their property.

Marriage also will persist as a name attached to a general custom long after the custom itself will have altered. For example, modern English marriage, as modified by divorce and by Married Women's Property Acts, differs more from early XIX century marriage than Byron's marriage did from Shakespear's. At the present moment marriage in England differs not only from marriage in France, but from marriage in Scotland. Marriage as modified by the divorce laws in South Dakota would be called mere promiscuity in Clapham. Yet the Americans, far from taking a profligate and cynical view of marriage, do homage to its ideals with a seriousness that seems old fashioned in Clapham. Neither in England nor America would a proposal to abolish marriage be tolerated for a moment; and yet nothing is more cer-

tain than that in both countries the progressive modification of the marriage contract will be continued until it is no more onerous nor irrevocable than any ordinary commercial deed of partnership. Were even this dispensed with, people would still call themselves husbands and wives; describe their companionships as marriages; and be for the most part unconscious that they were any less married than Henry VIII. For though a glance at the legal conditions of marriage in different Christian countries shows that marriage varies legally from frontier to frontier, domesticity varies so little that most people believe their own marriage laws to be universal. Consequently here again, as in the case of Property, the absolute confidence of the public in the stability of the institution's name, makes it all the easier to alter its substance.

However, it cannot be denied that one of the changes in public opinion demanded by the need for the Superman is a very unexpected one. It is nothing less than the dissolution of the present necessary association of marriage with conjugation, which most unmarried people regard as the very diagnostic of marriage. They are wrong, of course: it would be quite as near the truth to say that conjugation is the one purely accidental and incidental condition of marriage. Conjugation is essential to nothing but the propagation of the race; and the moment that paramount need is provided for otherwise than by marriage, conjugation, from Nature's creative point of view, ceases to be essential in marriage. But marriage does not thereupon cease to be so economical, convenient, and comfortable, that the Superman might safely bribe the matrimonomaniacs by offering to revive all the old inhuman stringency and irrevocability of marriage, to abolish divorce, to confirm the horrible bond which still chains decent people to drunkards, criminals, and wasters, provided only the complete extrication of conjugation from it were conceded to him. For if people could form domestic companionships on no easier terms than these, they would still marry. The Roman Catholic, forbidden by his Church to avail himself of the divorce laws, marries as freely as the South Dakotan Presbyterians who can change partners with a facility that scandalizes the old world; and were his Church to dare a further step towards Christianity and enjoin celibacy on its laity as well as on its clergy, marriages would still be contracted for the sake of domesticity by perfectly obedient sons and daughters of the Church. One need not further pursue

these hypotheses: they are only suggested here to help the reader to analyse marriage into its two functions of regulating conjugation and supplying a form of domesticity. These two functions are quite separable; and domesticity is the only one of the two which is essential to the existence of marriage, because conjugation without domesticity is not marriage at all, whereas domesticity without conjugation is still marriage: in fact it is necessarily the actual condition of all fertile marriages during a great part of their duration, and of some marriages during the whole of it.

Taking it, then, that Property and Marriage, by destroying Equality and thus hampering sexual selection with irrelevant conditions, are hostile to the evolution of the Superman, it is easy to understand why the only generally known modern experiment in breeding the human race took place in a community which discarded both institutions.

III

THE PERFECTIONIST EXPERIMENT AT ONEIDA CREEK

In 1848 the Oneida Community was founded in America to carry out a resolution arrived at by a handful of Perfectionist Communists "that we will devote ourselves exclusively to the establishment of the Kingdom of God." Though the American nation declared that this sort of thing was not to be tolerated in a Christian country, the Oneida Community held its own for over thirty years, during which period it seems to have produced healthier children and done and suffered less evil than any Joint Stock Company on record. It was, however, a highly selected community; for a genuine communist (roughly definable as an intensely proud person who proposes to enrich the common fund instead of to sponge on it) is superior to an ordinary joint stock capitalist precisely as an ordinary joint stock capitalist is superior to a pirate. Further, the Perfectionists were mightily shepherded by their chief Noyes,¹ one of those chance attempts at the Superman which occur from time to time in spite of the interference of Man's blundering institutions. The existence of Noyes simplified the breeding problem for the Communists, the question as to what sort of man they should strive to breed being settled at once by the obvious desirability of breeding another Noyes.

But an experiment conducted by a handful of people, who, after thirty years of immunity from the unintentional child slaughter that goes on by ignorant parents in private homes, numbered only 300, could do very little except prove that Communists, under the guidance of a Superman "devoted exclusively to the establishment of the Kingdom of God," and caring no more for property and marriage than a Camberwell minister cares for Hindoo Caste or Suttee, might make a much better job of their lives than ordinary folk under the harrow of both these institutions. Yet their Superman himself admitted that this apparent success was only part of the abnormal phenomenon of his own occurrence; for when he came to the end of his powers through age, he himself guided and organized the voluntary relapse of the Communists into marriage, capitalism, and customary private life, thus admitting that the real social solution was not what a casual Superman could persuade a picked company to do for him, but what a whole community of Supermen would do spontaneously. If Noyes had had to organize, not a few dozen Perfectionists, but the whole United States, America would have beaten him as completely as England beat Oliver Cromwell, France Napoleon, or Rome Julius Cæsar. Cromwell learnt by bitter experience that God Himself cannot raise a people above its own level, and that even though you stir a nation to sacrifice all its appetites to its conscience, the result will still depend wholly on what sort of conscience the nation has got. Napoleon seems to have ended by regarding mankind as a troublesome pack of hounds only worth keeping for the sport of hunting with them. Cæsar's capacity for fighting without hatred or resentment was defeated by the determination of his soldiers to kill their enemies in the field instead of taking them prisoners to be spared by Cæsar; and his civil supremacy was purchased by colossal bribery of the citizens of Rome. What great rulers cannot do, codes and religions cannot do. Man reads his own nature into every ordinance: if you devise a superhuman commandment so cunningly that it cannot be misinterpreted in terms of his will, he will denounce it as seditious blasphemy, or else disregard it as either crazy or totally unintelligible. Parliaments and synods may tinker as much as they please with their codes and creeds as circumstances alter the balance of classes and their interests; and, as a result of the tinkering, there may be an occasional illusion of moral evolution, as when the victory of the commercial caste

¹ John Humphrey Noyes (1811-1886). See article in *The Dictionary of American Biography*.

over the military caste leads to the substitution of social boycotting and pecuniary damages for duelling. At certain moments there may even be a considerable material advance, as when the conquest of political power by the working class produces a better distribution of wealth through the simple action of the selfishness of the new masters; but all this is mere readjustment and reformation: until the heart and mind of the people is changed the very greatest man will no more dare to govern on the assumption that all are as great as he than a drover dare leave his flock to find its way through the streets as he himself would. Until there is an England in which every man is a Cromwell, a France in which every man is a Napoleon, a Rome in which every man is a Cæsar, a Germany in which every man is a Luther plus a Goethe, the world will be no more improved by its heroes than a Brixton villa is improved by the pyramid of Cheops. The production of such nations is the only real change possible to us.

IV

MAN'S OBJECTION TO HIS OWN IMPROVEMENT

But would such a change be tolerated if Man must rise above himself to desire it? It would, through his misconception of its nature. Man does desire an ideal Superman with such energy as he can spare from his nutrition, and has in every age magnified the best living substitute for it he can find. His least incompetent general is set up as an Alexander; his king is the first gentleman in the world; his Pope is a saint. He is never without an array of human idols who are all nothing but sham Supermen. That the real Superman will snap his superfingers at all Man's present trumpery ideals of right, duty, honor, justice, religion, even decency, and accept moral obligations beyond present human endurance, is a thing that contemporary Man does not foresee: in fact he does not notice it when our casual Supermen do it in his very face. He actually does it himself every day without knowing it. He will therefore make no objection to the production of a race of what he calls Great Men or Heroes, because he will imagine them, not as true Supermen, but as himself endowed with infinite brains, infinite courage, and infinite money.

The most troublesome opposition will arise from the general fear of mankind that any interference with our conjugal customs will

be an interference with our pleasures and our romance. This fear, by putting on airs of offended morality, has always intimidated people who have not measured its essential weakness; but it will prevail with those degenerates only in whom the instinct of fertility has faded into a mere itching for pleasure. The modern devices for combining pleasure with sterility, now universally known and accessible, enable these persons to weed themselves out of the race, a process already vigorously at work; and the consequent survival of the intelligently fertile means the survival of the partizans of the Superman; for what is proposed is nothing but the replacement of the old unintelligent, inevitable, almost unconscious fertility by an intelligently controlled, conscious fertility, and the elimination of the mere voluptuary from the evolutionary process.* Even if this selective agency had not been invented, the purpose of the race would still shatter the opposition of individual instincts. Not only do the bees and the ants satisfy their reproductive and parental instincts vicariously; but marriage itself successfully imposes celibacy on millions of unmarried normal men and women. In short, the individual instinct in this matter, overwhelming as it is thoughtlessly supposed to be, is really a finally negligible one.

V

THE POLITICAL NEED FOR THE SUPERMAN

The need for the Superman is, in its most imperative aspect, a political one. We have been driven to Proletarian Democracy by the failure of the alternative systems; for these depended on the existence of Supermen acting as despots or oligarchs; and not only were these Supermen not always or even often forthcoming at the right moment and in an eligible social position, but when they were forthcoming they could not, except for a short time and by morally suicidal coercive

* The part played in evolution by the voluptuary will be the same as that already played by the glutton. The glutton, as the man with the strongest motive for nourishing himself, will always take more pains than his fellows to get food. When food is so difficult to get that only great exertions can secure a sufficient supply of it, the glutton's appetite develops his cunning and enterprise to the utmost; and he becomes not only the best fed but the ablest man in the community. But in more hospitable climates, or where the social organization of the food supply makes it easy for a man to overeat, then the glutton eats himself out of health and finally out of existence. All other voluptuaries prosper and perish in the same way; and this is why the survival of the fittest means finally the survival of the self-controlled, because they alone can adapt themselves to the perpetual shifting of conditions produced by industrial progress.

methods, impose superhumanity on those whom they governed; so, by mere force of "human nature," government by consent of the governed has supplanted the old plan of governing the citizen as a public-schoolboy is governed.

Now we have yet to see the man who, having any practical experience of Proletarian Democracy, has any belief in its capacity for solving great political problems, or even for doing ordinary parochial work intelligently and economically. Only under despotisms and oligarchies has the Radical faith in "universal suffrage" as a political panacea arisen. It withers the moment it is exposed to practical trial, because Democracy cannot rise above the level of the human material of which its voters are made. Switzerland seems happy in comparison with Russia; but if Russia were as small as Switzerland, and had her social problems simplified in the same way by impregnable natural fortifications and a population educated by the same variety of intimacy of international intercourse, there might be little to choose between them. At all events Australia and Canada, which are virtually protected democratic republics, and France and the United States, which are avowedly independent democratic republics, are neither healthy, wealthy, nor wise; and they would be worse instead of better if their popular ministers were not experts in the art of dodging popular enthusiasms and duping popular ignorance. The politician who once had to learn how to flatter Kings has now to learn how to fascinate, amuse, coax, humbug, frighten, or otherwise strike the fancy of the electorate; and though in advanced modern States, where the artisan is better educated than the King, it takes a much bigger man to be a successful demagogue than to be a successful courtier, yet he who holds popular convictions with prodigious energy is the man for the mob, whilst the frailer sceptic who is cautiously feeling his way towards the next century has no chance unless he happens by accident to have the specific artistic talent of the mountebank as well, in which case it is as a mountebank that he catches votes, and not as a meliorist. Consequently the demagogue, though he professes (and fails) to readjust matters in the interests of the majority of the electors, yet stereotypes mediocrity, organizes intolerance, disparages exhibitions of uncommon qualities, and glorifies conspicuous exhibitions of common ones. He manages a small job well: he muddles rhetorically through a large one. When a great political movement takes place, it is not

consciously led nor organized: the unconscious self in mankind breaks its way through the problem as an elephant breaks through a jungle; and the politicians make speeches about whatever happens in the process, which, with the best intentions, they do all in their power to prevent. Finally, when social aggregation arrives at a point demanding international organization before the demagogues and electorates have learnt how to manage even a country parish properly, much less internationalize Constantinople, the whole political business goes to smash; and presently we have Ruins of Empires, New Zealanders sitting on a broken arch of London Bridge,¹ and so forth.

To that recurrent catastrophe we shall certainly come again unless we can have a Democracy of Supermen; and the production of such a Democracy is the only change that is now hopeful enough to nerve us to the effort that Revolution demands.

VI

PRUDERY EXPLAINED

Why the bees should pamper their mothers whilst we pamper only our operatic prima donnas is a question worth reflecting on. Our notion of treating a mother is, not to increase her supply of food, but to cut it off by forbidding her to work in a factory for a month after her confinement. Everything that can make birth a misfortune to the parents as well as a danger to the mother is conscientiously done. When a great French writer, Émile Zola, alarmed at the sterilization of his nation, wrote an eloquent and powerful book to restore the prestige of parentage, it was at once assumed in England that a work of this character, with such a title as *Fecundity*, was too abominable to be translated, and that any attempt to deal with the relations of the sexes from any other than the voluptuary or romantic point of view must be sternly put down. Now if this assumption were really founded on public opinion, it would indicate an attitude of disgust and resentment towards the Life Force that could only arise in a diseased and moribund community in which Ibsen's Hedda Gabler would be the typical woman. But it has no vital foundation at all. The prudery of the newspapers is, like the prudery of the dinner table, a mere difficulty of education and lan-

¹ Macaulay, in his essay on Ranke's *History of the Popes*, said that the Church would still endure even when a New Zealander sat on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's.

guage. We are not taught to think decently on these subjects, and consequently we have no language for them except indecent language. We therefore have to declare them unfit for public discussion, because the only terms in which we can conduct the discussion are unfit for public use. Physiologists, who have a technical vocabulary at their disposal, find no difficulty; and masters of language who think decently can write popular stories like Zola's *Fecundity* or Tolstoy's *Resurrection* without giving the smallest offence to readers who can also think decently. But the ordinary modern journalist, who has never discussed such matters except in ribaldry, cannot write a simple comment on a divorce case without a conscious shamefulness or a furtive facetiousness that makes it impossible to read the comment aloud in company. All this ribaldry and prudery (the two are the same) does not mean that people do not feel decently on the subject: on the contrary, it is just the depth and seriousness of our feeling that makes its desecration by vile language and coarse humor intolerable; so that at last we cannot bear to have it spoken of at all because only one in a thousand can speak of it without wounding our self-respect, especially the self-respect of women. Add to the horrors of popular language the horrors of popular poverty. In crowded populations poverty destroys the possibility of cleanliness; and in the absence of cleanliness many of the natural conditions of life become offensive and noxious, with the result that at last the association of uncleanliness with these natural conditions becomes so overpowering that among civilized people (that is, people massed in the labyrinths of slums we call cities), half their bodily life becomes a guilty secret, unmentionable except to the doctor in emergencies; and Hedda Gabler shoots herself because maternity is so unladylike. In short, popular prudery is only a mere incident of popular squalor: the subjects which it taboos remain the most interesting and earnest of subjects in spite of it.

VII

PROGRESS AN ILLUSION

Unfortunately the earnest people get drawn off the track of evolution by the illusion of progress. Any Socialist can convince us easily that the difference between Man as he is and Man as he might become, without further evolution, under millennial conditions of nutrition, environment, and training, is

enormous. He can shew that inequality and iniquitous distribution of wealth and allotment of labor have arisen through an unscientific economic system, and that Man, faulty as he is, no more intended to establish any such ordered disorder than a moth intends to be burnt when it flies into a candle flame. He can shew that the difference between the grace and strength of the acrobat and the bent back of the rheumatic field laborer is a difference produced by conditions, not by nature. He can shew that many of the most detestable human vices are not radical, but are mere reactions of our institutions on our very virtues. The Anarchist, the Fabian, the Salvationist, the Vegetarian, the doctor, the lawyer, the parson, the professor of ethics, the gymnast, the soldier, the sportsman, the inventor, the political program-maker, all have some prescription for bettering us; and almost all their remedies are physically possible and aimed at admitted evils. To them the limit of progress is, at worst, the completion of all the suggested reforms and the levelling up of all men to the point attained already by the most highly nourished and cultivated in mind and body.

Here, then, as it seems to them, is an enormous field for the energy of the reformer. Here are many noble goals attainable by many of those paths up the Hill Difficulty along which great spirits love to aspire. Unhappily, the hill will never be climbed by Man as we know him. It need not be denied that if we all struggled bravely to the end of the reformers' paths we should improve the world prodigiously. But there is no more hope in that. If than in the equally plausible assurance that if the sky falls we shall all catch larks. We are not going to tread those paths: we have not sufficient energy. We do not desire the end enough: indeed in most cases we do not effectively desire it at all. Ask any man would he like to be a better man; and he will say yes, most piously. Ask him would he like to have a million of money; and he will say yes, most sincerely. But the pious citizen who would like to be a better man goes on behaving just as he did before. And the tramp who would like the million does not take the trouble to earn ten shillings: multitudes of men and women, all eager to accept a legacy of a million, live and die without having ever possessed five pounds at one time, although beggars have died in rags on mattresses stuffed with gold which they accumulated because they desired it enough to nerve them to get it and keep it. The economists who discovered that demand created supply soon

had to limit the proposition to "effective demand," which turned out, in the final analysis, to mean nothing more than supply itself; and this holds good in politics, morals, and all other departments as well: the actual supply is the measure of the effective demand; and the mere aspirations and professions produce nothing. No community has ever yet passed beyond the initial phases in which its pugnacity and fanaticism enabled it to found a nation, and its cupidity to establish and develop a commercial civilization. Even these stages have never been attained by public spirit, but always by tolerant wilfulness and brute force. Take the Reform Bill of 1832 as an example of a conflict between two sections of educated Englishmen concerning a political measure which was as obviously necessary and inevitable as any political measure has ever been or is ever likely to be. It was not passed until the gentlemen of Birmingham had made arrangements to cut the throats of the gentlemen of St James's parish in due military form. It would not have been passed to this day if there had been no force behind it except the logic and public conscience of the Utilitarians. A despotic ruler with as much sense as Queen Elizabeth would have done better than the mob of grown-up Eton boys who governed us then by privilege, and who, since the introduction of practically Manhood Suffrage in 1884, now govern us at the request of Proletarian Democracy.

At the present time we have, instead of the Utilitarians, the Fabian Society, with its peaceful, constitutional, moral, economical policy of Socialism, which needs nothing for its bloodless and benevolent realization except that the English people shall understand it and approve of it. But why are the Fabians well spoken of in circles where thirty years ago the word Socialist was understood as equivalent to cut-throat and incendiary? Not because the English have the smallest intention of studying or adopting the Fabian policy, but because they believe that the Fabians, by eliminating the element of intimidation from the Socialist agitation, have drawn the teeth of insurgent poverty and saved the existing order from the only method of attack it really fears. Of course, if the nation adopted the Fabian policy, it would be carried out by brute force exactly as our present property system is. It would become the law; and those who resisted it would be fined, sold up, knocked on the head by policemen, thrown into prison, and in the last resort "executed" just as they are when they break the present law. But as our

proprietary class has no fear of that conversion taking place, whereas it does fear sporadic cut-throats and gunpowder plots, and strives with all its might to hide the fact that there is no moral difference whatever between the methods by which it enforces its proprietary rights and the method by which the dynamitard asserts his conception of natural human rights, the Fabian Society is patted on the back just as the Christian Social Union is, whilst the Socialist who says bluntly that a Social revolution can be made only as all other revolutions have been made, by the people who want it killing, coercing, and intimidating the people who don't want it, is denounced as a misleader of the people, and imprisoned with hard labor to shew him how much sincerity there is in the objection of his captors to physical force.

Are we then to repudiate Fabian methods, and return to those of the barricader, or adopt those of the dynamitard and the assassin? On the contrary, we are to recognize that both are fundamentally futile. It seems easy for the dynamitard to say "Have you not just admitted that nothing is ever conceded except to physical force? Did not Gladstone admit that the Irish Church was disestablished, not by the spirit of Liberalism, but by the explosion which wrecked Clerkenwell prison?"¹ Well, we need not foolishly and timidly deny it. Let it be fully granted. Let us grant, further, that all this lies in the nature of things; that the most ardent Socialist, if he owns property, can by no means do otherwise than Conservative proprietors until property is forcibly abolished by the whole nation; nay, that ballots and parliamentary divisions, in spite of their vain ceremony of discussion, differ from battles only as the bloodless surrender of an outnumbered force in the field differs from Waterloo or Trafalgar. I make a present of all these admissions to the Fenian who collects money from thoughtless Irishmen in America to blow up Dublin Castle; to the detective who persuades foolish young workmen to order bombs from the nearest ironmonger and then delivers them up to penal servitude; to our military and naval commanders who believe, not in preaching, but in an ultimatum backed by plenty of lyddite; and, generally, to all whom it may concern. But of what use is it to substitute the way of the reckless and bloodyminded for the way of the cautious and humane? Is England any the better for

¹ Clerkenwell prison, near London, was blown up by Irish agitators in 1867. In 1869 Gladstone sponsored and Parliament passed the bill disestablishing the Anglican Church of Ireland.

the wreck of Clerkenwell prison, or Ireland for the disestablishment of the Irish Church? Is there the smallest reason to suppose that the nation which sheepishly let Charles and Laud and Strafford coerce it, gained anything because it afterwards, still more sheepishly, let a few strongminded Puritans, inflamed by the masterpieces of Jewish revolutionary literature, cut off the heads of the three? Suppose the Gunpowder plot had succeeded, and set a Fawkes dynasty permanently on the throne, would it have made any difference to the present state of the nation? The guillotine was used in France up to the limit of human endurance, both on Girondins and Jacobins. Fouquier-Tinville followed Marie Antoinette to the scaffold; and Marie Antoinette might have asked the crowd, just as pointedly as Fouquier did, whether their bread would be any cheaper when her head was off.¹ And what came of it all? The Imperial France of the Rougon-Macquart family,² and the Republican France of the Panama scandal³ and the Dreyfus case.⁴ Was the difference worth the guillotining of all those unlucky ladies and gentlemen, useless and mischievous as many of them were? Would any sane man guillotine a mouse to bring about such a result? Turn to Republican America. America has no Star Chamber, and no feudal barons. But it has Trusts; and it has millionaires whose factories, fenced in by live electric wires and defended by Pinkerton retainers with magazine rifles, would have made a Radical of Reginald Front de Bœuf.⁵ Would Washington or Franklin have lifted a finger in the cause of American Independence if they had foreseen its reality?

No: what Cæsar, Cromwell, and Napoleon could not do with all the physical force and moral prestige of the State in their mighty hands, cannot be done by enthusiastic criminals and lunatics. Even the Jews, who, from Moses to Marx and Lasalle, have inspired all the revolutions, have had to confess that, after all, the dog will return to his vomit and the sow that was washed to her wallowing

in the mire; and we may as well make up our minds that Man will return to his idols and his cupidities, in spite of all "movements" and all revolutions, until his nature is changed. Until then, his early successes in building commercial civilizations (and such civilizations, Good Heavens!) are but preliminaries to the inevitable later stage, now threatening us, in which the passions which built the civilization became fatal instead of productive, just as the same qualities which make the lion king in the forest ensure his destruction when he enters a city. Nothing can save society then except the clear head and the wide purpose: war and competition, potent instruments of selection and evolution in one epoch, become ruinous instruments of degeneration in the next. In the breeding of animals and plants, varieties which have arisen by selection through many generations relapse precipitously into the wild type in a generation or two when selection ceases; and in the same way a civilization in which lusty pugnacity and greed have ceased to act as selective agents and have begun to obstruct and destroy, rushes downwards and backwards with a suddenness that enables an observer to see with consternation the upward steps of many centuries retraced in a single lifetime. This has often occurred even within the period covered by history; and in every instance the turning point has been reached long before the attainment, or even the general advocacy on paper, or the levelling-up of the mass to the highest point attainable by the best nourished and cultivated normal individuals.

We must therefore frankly give up the notion that Man as he exists is capable of net progress. There will always be an illusion of progress, because wherever we are conscious of an evil we remedy it, and therefore always seem to ourselves to be progressing, forgetting that most of the evils we see are the effects, finally become acute, of long-unnoticed retrogressions; that our compromising remedies seldom fully recover the lost ground; above all, that on the lines along which we are degenerating, good has become evil in our eyes, and is being undone in the name of progress precisely as evil is undone and replaced by good on the lines along which we are evolving. This is indeed the Illusion of Illusions; for it gives us infallible and appalling assurance that if our political ruin is to come, it will be effected by ardent reformers and supported by enthusiastic patriots as a series of necessary steps in our progress. Let the Reformer, the Progressive, the Meliorist then reconsider

¹ Fouquier-Tinville, prosecutor under the Terror, was told by the mob to "Go, join your victims." He answered, "Go, look for bread."

² Described by Zola in some twenty novels.

³ In 1893 some directors of the French Panama Company, then trying to dig the Canal, were convicted of bribing members of the Chamber of Deputies in connection with government loans to the Company.

⁴ In 1894 Capt. Alfred Dreyfus, a Jew, was accused of revealing French Army secrets to a foreign power (Germany was meant). Convicted on forged evidence and sentenced to harsh imprisonment on Devil's Island, he served five years before agitation led by Zola and Clemenceau resulted in new trials and complete exoneration in 1906.

⁵ The stolid villain in Scott's *Ivanhoe*.

himself and his eternal ifs and ans which never become pots and pans. Whilst Man remains what he is, there can be no progress beyond the point already attained and fallen headlong from at every attempt at civilization; and since even that point is but a pinnacle to which a few people cling in giddy terror above an abyss of squalor, a mere progress should no longer charm us.

VIII

THE CONCEIT OF CIVILIZATION

After all, the progress illusion is not so very subtle. We begin by reading the satires of our fathers' contemporaries; and we conclude (usually quite ignorantly) that the abuses exposed by them are things of the past. We see also that reforms of crying evils are frequently produced by the sectional shifting of political power from oppressors to oppressed. The poor man is given a vote by the Liberals in the hope that he will cast it for his emancipators. The hope is not fulfilled; but the lifelong imprisonment of penniless men for debt ceases; Factory Acts are passed to mitigate sweating; schooling is made free and compulsory; sanitary by-laws are multiplied; public steps are taken to house the masses decently; the bare-footed get boots; rags become rare; and bathrooms and pianos, smart tweeds and starched collars, reach numbers of people who once, as "the unsoaped," played the Jew's harp or the accordion in moleskins and belchers.¹ Some of these changes are gains: some of them are losses. Some of them are not changes at all: all of them are merely the changes that money makes. Still, they produce an illusion of bustling progress; and the reading class infers from them that the abuses of the early Victorian period no longer exist except as amusing pages in the novels of Dickens. But the moment we look for a reform due to character and not to money, to statesmanship and not to interest or mutiny, we are disillusioned. For example, we remembered the maladministration and incompetence revealed by the Crimean war as part of a bygone state of things until the South African war shewed that the nation and the War Office, like those poor Bourbons who have been so impudently blamed for a universal characteristic, had learnt nothing and forgotten nothing. We had hardly recovered from the fruitless irritation of this discovery when it transpired that the officers' mess of

our most select regiment included a flogging club presided over by the senior subaltern. The disclosure provoked some disgust at the details of this schoolboyish debauchery, but no surprise at the apparent absence of any conception of manly honor and virtue, of personal courage and self-respect, in the front rank of our chivalry. In civil affairs we had assumed that the sycophancy and idolatry which encouraged Charles I to undervalue the Puritan revolt of the XVII century had been long outgrown; but it has needed nothing but favorable circumstances to revive, with added abjectness to compensate for its lost piety. We have relapsed into disputes about transubstantiation at the very moment when the discovery of the wide prevalence of theophagy as a tribal custom has deprived us of the last excuse for believing that our official religious rites differ in essentials from those of barbarians. The Christian doctrine of the uselessness of punishment and the wickedness of revenge has not, in spite of its simple common sense, found a single convert among the nations; Christianity means nothing to the masses but a sensational public execution which is made an excuse for other executions. In its name we take ten years of a thief's life minute by minute in the slow misery and degradation of modern reformed imprisonment with as little remorse as Laud and his Star Chamber clipped the ears of Bastwick and Burton.¹ We dug up and mutilated the remains of the Mahdi² the other day exactly as we dug up and mutilated the remains of Cromwell two centuries ago. We have demanded the decapitation of the Chinese Boxer princes as any Tartar would have done; and our military and naval expeditions to kill, burn, and destroy tribes and villages for knocking an Englishman on the head are so common a part of our Imperial routine that the last dozen of them has not called forth as much pity as can be counted on by any lady criminal. The judicial use of torture to extort confession is supposed to be a relic of darker ages; but whilst these pages are being written an English judge has sentenced a forger to twenty years' penal servitude with an open declaration that the sentence will be carried out in full unless he confesses where he has hidden the notes he forged. And no comment whatever is made either on this or on a telegram from the seat of war in Somaliland mentioning that certain

¹ Puritan agitators who accused Laud of favoring Roman Catholicism.

² Sudanese leader of rebellion against Egyptian-British authority 1881-1885. His body was exhumed, burned, and the ashes thrown into the Nile in 1898.

¹ Parti-colored neckerchiefs.

information has been given by a prisoner of war "under punishment." Even if these reports are false, the fact that they are accepted without protest as indicating a natural and proper course of public conduct shews that we are still as ready to resort to torture as Bacon was. As to vindictive cruelty, an incident in the South African war, when the relatives and friends of a prisoner were forced to witness his execution, betrayed a baseness of temper and character which hardly leaves us the right to plume ourselves on our superiority to Edward III at the surrender of Calais.¹ And the democratic American officer indulges in torture in the Philippines just as the aristocratic English officer did in South Africa. The incidents of the white invasion of Africa in search of ivory, gold, diamonds, and sport, have proved that the modern European is the same beast of prey that formerly marched to the conquest of new worlds under Alexander, Antony, and Pizarro. Parliaments and vestries are just what they were when Cromwell suppressed them and Dickens derided them. The democratic politician remains exactly as Plato described him; the physician is still the credulous impostor and petulant scientific coxcomb whom Molière ridiculed; the schoolmaster remains at best a pedantic child farmer and at worst a flagellomaniac; arbitrations are more dreaded by honest men than lawsuits; the philanthropist is still a parasite on misery as the doctor is on disease; the miracles of priestcraft are none the less fraudulent and mischievous because they are now called scientific experiments and conducted by professors; witchcraft, in the modern form of patent medicines and prophylactic inoculations, is rampant; the landowner who is no longer powerful enough to set the mantrap of Rhampsinitis² improves on it by barbed wire; the modern gentleman who is too lazy to daub his face with vermilion as a symbol of bravery employs a laundress to daub his shirt with starch as a symbol of cleanliness; we shake our heads at the dirt of the middle ages in cities made grimy with soot and foul and disgusting with shameless tobacco smoking; holy water, in its latest form of disinfectant fluid, is more widely used and believed in than ever; public health authorities deliberately go through incantations with burning sulphur (which they know to be useless) because the people believe in it as devoutly as the Italian peas-

ant believes in the liquefaction of the blood of St Januarius; and straightforward public lying has reached gigantic developments, there being nothing to choose in this respect between the pickpocket at the police station and the minister on the treasury bench, the editor in the newspaper office, the city magnate advertizing bicycle tires that do not side-slip, the clergyman subscribing the thirty-nine articles, and the vivisector who pledges his knightly honor that no animal operated on in the physiological laboratory suffers the slightest pain. Hypocrisy is at its worst; for we not only persecute bigotedly but sincerely in the name of the cure-mongering witchcraft we do believe in, but callously and hypocritically in the name of the Evangelical creed that our rulers privately smile at as the Italian patricians of the fifth century smiled at Jupiter and Venus. Sport is, as it has always been, murderous excitement: the impulse to slaughter is universal; and museums are set up throughout the country to encourage little children and elderly gentlemen to make collections of corpses preserved in alcohol, and to steal birds' eggs and keep them as the red Indian used to keep scalps. Coercion with the lash is as natural to an Englishman as it was to Solomon spoiling Rehoboam: ¹ indeed, the comparison is unfair to the Jews in view of the facts that the Mosaic law forbade more than forty lashes in the name of humanity, and that floggings of a thousand lashes were inflicted on English soldiers in the XVIII and XIX centuries, and would be inflicted still but for the change in the balance of political power between the military caste and the commercial classes and the proletariat. In spite of that change, flogging is still an institution in the public school, in the military prison, on the training ship, and in that school of littleness called the home. The lascivious clamor of the flagellomaniac for more of it, constant as the clamor for more insolence, more war, and lower rates, is tolerated and even gratified because, having no moral ends in view, we have sense enough to see that nothing but brute coercion can impose our selfish will on others. Cowardice is universal: patriotism, public opinion, parental duty, discipline, religion, morality, are only fine names for intimidation; and cruelty, gluttony, and credulity keep cowardice in countenance. We cut the throat of a calf and hang it up by the heels to bleed to death so that our veal cutlet may be white; we nail geese to a board and cram

¹ In 1934, Shaw dramatized this historical episode in one act, *The Six of Calais*.

² Ramesses III of Egypt, who caught robbers of his treasury.

¹ The Bible reports no episode in which Solomon "spoils" Rehoboam.

them with food because we like the taste of liver disease; we tear birds to pieces to decorate our women's hats; we mutilate domestic animals for no reason at all except to follow an instinctively cruel fashion; and we connive at the most abominable tortures in the hope of discovering some magical cure for our own diseases by them.

Now please observe that these are not exceptional developments of our admitted vices, deplored and prayed against by all good men. Not a word has been said here of the excesses of our Neros, of whom we have the full usual percentage. With the exception of the few military examples, which are mentioned mainly to shew that the education and standing of a gentleman, reinforced by the strongest conventions of honor, *esprit de corps*, publicity and responsibility, afford no better guarantees of conduct than the passions of a mob, the illustrations given above are commonplaces taken from the daily practices of our best citizens, vehemently defended in our newspapers and in our pulpits. The very humanitarians who abhor them are stirred to murder by them: the dagger of Brutus and Ravallac is still active in the hands of Caserio and Luccheni; and the pistol has come to its aid in the hands of Guiteau and Czolgosz.¹ Our remedies are still limited to endurance or assassination; and the assassin is still judicially assassinated on the principle that two blacks make a white. The only novelty is in our methods: through the discovery of dynamite the overloaded musket of Hamilton of Bothwellhaugh² has been superseded by the bomb; but Ravachol's³ heart burns just as Hamilton's did. The world will not bear thinking of to those who know what it is, even with the largest discount for the restraints of poverty on the poor and cowardice on the rich.

All that can be said for us is that people must and do live and let live up to a certain point. Even the horse, with his docked tail and bitted jaw, finds his slavery mitigated by the fact that a total disregard of his need for food and rest would put his master to the expense of buying a new horse every second day; for you cannot work a horse to death and then pick up another one for nothing, as you can a laborer. But this natural check on inconsiderate selfishness is itself checked,

partly by our shortsightedness, and partly by deliberate calculation; so that beside the man who, to his own loss, will shorten his horse's life in mere stinginess, we have the tramway company which discovers actuarially that though a horse may live from 24 to 40 years, yet it pays better to work him to death in 4 and then replace him by a fresh victim. And human slavery, which has reached its worst recorded point within our own time in the form of free wage labor, has encountered the same personal and commercial limits to both its aggravation and its mitigation. Now that the freedom of wage labor has produced a scarcity of it, as in South Africa, the leading English newspaper and the leading English weekly review have openly and without apology demanded a return to compulsory labor: that is, to the methods by which, as we believe, the Egyptians built the pyramids. We know now that the crusade against chattel slavery in the XIX century succeeded solely because chattel slavery was neither the most effective nor the least humane method of labor exploitation; and the world is now feeling its way towards a still more effective system which shall abolish the freedom of the worker without again making his exploiter responsible for him.

Still, there is always some mitigation: there is the fear of revolt; and there are the effects of kindness and affection. Let it be repeated therefore that no indictment is here laid against the world on the score of what its criminals and monsters do. The fires of Smithfield¹ and of the Inquisition were lighted by earnestly pious people, who were kind and good as kindness and goodness go. And when a negro is dipped in kerosene and set on fire in America at the present time, he is not a good man lynched by ruffians: he is a criminal lynched by crowds of respectable, charitable, virtuously indignant, high-minded citizens, who, though they act outside the law, are at least more merciful than the American legislators and judges who not so long ago condemned men to solitary confinement for periods, not of five months, as our own practice is, but of five years and more. The things that our moral monsters do may be left out of account with St. Bartholomew massacres² and other momentary outbursts of social disorder. Judge us by the admitted and respected practice of our most reputable circles; and, if you know the facts and are strong enough to look

¹ Ravallac assassinated Henry IV of France; Caserio, Carnot; Luccheni, Queen Elizabeth of Austria; Guiteau, President Garfield; Czolgosz, President McKinley.

² Assassin of the Earl of Moray, regent of Scotland, 1570.

³ Guillotined in 1893 for numerous dynamite murders. Claimed to be an anarchist.

¹ District in the City of London where executions took place, especially of religious recalcitrants under the Tudors.

² Massacre of Protestants in France, 1572.

them in the face, you must admit that unless we are replaced by a more highly evolved animal—in short, by the Superman—the world must remain a den of dangerous animals among whom our few accidental supermen, our Shakespears, Goethes, Shelleys, and their like, must live as precariously as lion tamers do, taking the humor of their situation, and the dignity of their superiority, as a set-off to the horror of the one and the loneliness of the other.

IX

THE VERDICT OF HISTORY

It may be said that though the wild beast breaks out in Man and casts him back momentarily into barbarism under the excitement of war and crime, yet his normal life is higher than the normal life of his forefathers. This view is very acceptable to Englishmen, who always lean sincerely to virtue's side as long as it costs them nothing either in money or in thought. They feel deeply the injustice of foreigners, who allow them no credit for this conditional high-mindedness. But there is no reason to suppose that our ancestors were less capable of it than we are. To all such claims for the existence of a progressive moral evolution operating visibly from grandfather to grandson, there is the conclusive reply that a thousand years of such evolution would have produced enormous social changes, of which the historical evidence would be overwhelming. But not Macaulay himself, the most confident of Whig meliorists, can produce any such evidence that will bear cross-examination. Compare our conduct and our codes with those mentioned contemporarily in such ancient scriptures and classics as have come down to us, and you will find no jot of ground for the belief that any moral progress whatever has been made in historic time, in spite of all the romantic attempts of historians to reconstruct the past on that assumption. Within that time it has happened to nations as to private families and individuals that they have flourished and decayed, repented and hardened their hearts, submitted and protested, acted and reacted, oscillated between natural and artificial sanitation (the oldest house in the world, unearthed the other day in Crete, has quite modern sanitary arrangements), and rung a thousand changes on the different scales of income and pressure of population, firmly believing all the time that mankind was advancing by leaps and bounds because men

were constantly busy. And the mere chapter of accidents has left a small accumulation of chance discoveries, such as the wheel, the arch, the safety pin, gunpowder, the magnet, the Voltaic pile and so forth: things which, unlike the gospels and philosophic treatises of the sages, can be usefully understood and applied by common men; so that steam locomotion is possible without a nation of Stephensons, although national Christianity is impossible without a nation of Christs. But does any man seriously believe that the *chauffeur* who drives a motor car from Paris to Berlin is a more highly evolved man than the charioteer of Achilles, or that a modern Prime Minister is a more enlightened ruler than Caesar because he rides a tricycle, writes his dispatches by the electric light, and instructs his stockbroker through the telephone?

Enough, then, of this goose-cackle about Progress: Man, as he is, never will nor can add a cubit to his stature by any of its quackeries, political, scientific, educational, religious, or artistic. What is likely to happen when this conviction gets into the minds of the men whose present faith in these illusions is the cement of our social system, can be imagined only by those who know how suddenly a civilization which has long ceased to think (or in the old phrase, to watch and pray) can fall to pieces when the vulgar belief in its hypocrisies and impostures can no longer hold out against its failures and scandals. When religious and ethical formulæ become so obsolete that no man of strong mind can believe them, they have also reached the point at which no man of high character will profess them; and from that moment until they are formally disestablished, they stand at the door of every profession and every public office to keep out every able man who is not a sophist or a liar. A nation which revises its parish councils once in three years, but will not revise its articles of religion once in three hundred, even when those articles avowedly began as a political compromise dictated by Mr Facing-Both-Ways, is a nation that needs re-making.

Our only hope, then, is in evolution. We must replace the man by the superman. It is frightful for the citizen, as the years pass him, to see his own contemporaries so exactly reproduced by the younger generation, that his companions of thirty years ago have their counterparts in every city crowd, where he has to check himself repeatedly in the act of saluting as an old friend some young man to whom he is only an elderly stranger. All

hope of advance dies in his bosom as he watches them: he knows that they will do just what their fathers did, and that the few voices which will still, as always before, exhort them to do something else and be something better, might as well spare their breath to cool their porridge (if they can get any). Men like Ruskin and Carlyle will preach to Smith and Brown for the sake of preaching, just as St Francis preached to the birds and St Anthony to the fishes. But Smith and Brown, like the fishes and birds, remain as they are; and poets who plan Utopias and prove that nothing is necessary for their realization but that Man should will them, perceive at last, like Richard Wagner, that the fact to be faced is that Man does not effectively will them. And he never will until he becomes Superman.

And so we arrive at the end of the Socialist's dream of "the socialization of the means of production and exchange," of the Positivist's dream of moralizing the capitalist, and of the ethical professor's, legislator's, educator's dream of putting commandments and codes and lessons and examination marks on a man as harness is put on a horse, ermine on a judge, pipe-clay on a soldier, or a wig on an actor, and pretending that his nature has been changed. The only fundamental and possible Socialism is the socialization of the selective breeding of Man: in other terms, of human evolution. We must eliminate the Yahoo, or his vote will wreck the commonwealth.

X

THE METHOD

As to the method, what can be said as yet except that where there is a will, there is a way? If there be no will, we are lost. That is a possibility for our crazy little empire, if not for the universe; and as such possibilities are not to be entertained without despair, we must, whilst we survive, proceed on the assumption that we have still energy enough to not only will to live, but to will to live better. That may mean that we must establish a State Department of Evolution, with a seat in the Cabinet for its chief, and a revenue to defray the cost of direct State experiments, and provide inducements to private persons to achieve successful results. It may mean a private society or a chartered company for the improvement of human live stock. But for the present it is far more likely to mean a blatant repudiation of such proposals as indecent and immoral, with,

nevertheless, a general secret pushing of the human will in the repudiated direction; so that all sorts of institutions and public authorities will under some pretext or other feel their way furtively towards the Superman. Mr. Graham Wallas has already ventured to suggest, as Chairman of the School Management Committee of the London School Board, that the accepted policy of the Sterilization of the Schoolmistress, however administratively convenient, is open to criticism from the national stock-breeding point of view; and this is as good an example as any of the way in which the drift towards the Superman may operate in spite of all our hypocrisies. One thing at least is clear to begin with. If a woman can, by careful selection of a father, and nourishment of herself, produce a citizen with efficient senses, sound organs, and a good digestion, she should clearly be secured a sufficient reward for that natural service to make her willing to undertake and repeat it. Whether she be financed in the undertaking by herself, or by the father, or by a speculative capitalist, or by a new department of, say, the Royal Dublin Society, or (as at present) by the War Office maintaining her "on the strength" and authorizing a particular soldier to marry her, or by a local authority under a by-law directing that women may under certain circumstances have a year's leave of absence on full salary, or by the central government, does not matter provided the result be satisfactory.

It is a melancholy fact that as the vast majority of women and their husbands have, under exacting circumstances, not enough nourishment, no capital, no credit, and no knowledge of science or business, they would, if the State would pay for birth as it now pays for death, be exploited by joint stock companies for dividends, just as they are in ordinary industries. Even a joint stock human stud farm (piously disguised as a reformed Foundling Hospital or something of that sort) might well, under proper inspection and regulation, produce better results than our present reliance on promiscuous marriage. It may be objected that when an ordinary contractor produces stores for sale to the Government, and the Government rejects them as not up to the required standard, the condemned goods are either sold for what they will fetch or else scrapped: that is, treated as waste material; whereas if the goods consisted of human beings, all that could be done would be to let them loose or send them to the nearest workhouse. But there is nothing new in private

enterprise throwing its human refuse on the cheap labor market and the workhouse; and the refuse of the new industry would presumably be better bred than the staple product of ordinary poverty. In our present happy-go-lucky industrial disorder, all the human products, successful or not, would have to be thrown on the labor market; but the unsuccessful ones would not entitle the company to a bounty and so would be a dead loss to it. The practical commercial difficulty would be the uncertainty and the cost in time and money of the first experiments. Purely commercial capital would not touch such heroic operations during the experimental stage; and in any case the strength of mind needed for so momentous a new departure could not be fairly expected from the Stock Exchange. It will have to be handled by statesmen with character enough to tell our democracy and plutocracy that statecraft does not consist in flattering their follies or applying their suburban standards of propriety to the affairs of four continents. The matter must be taken up either by the State or by some organization strong enough to impose respect upon the State.

The novelty of any such experiment, however, is only in the scale of it. In one conspicuous case, that of royalty, the State does already select the parents on purely political grounds; and in the peerage, though the heir to a dukedom is legally free to marry a dairymaid, yet the social pressure on him to confine his choice to politically and socially eligible mates is so overwhelming that he is really no more free to marry the dairymaid than George IV was to marry Mrs Fitzherbert; and such a marriage could only occur as a result of extraordinary strength of character on the part of the dairymaid acting upon extraordinary weakness on the part of the duke. Let those who think the whole conception of intelligent breeding absurd and scandalous ask themselves why George IV was not allowed to choose his own wife whilst any tinker could marry whom he pleased? Simply because it did not matter a rap politically whom the tinker married, whereas it mattered very much whom the king married. The way in which all considerations of the king's personal rights, of the claims of the heart, of the sanctity of the marriage oath, and of romantic morality crumpled up before this political need shews how negligible all these apparently irresistible prejudices are when they come into conflict with the demand for quality in our rulers. We learn the same lesson from the case of the soldier, whose marriage, when it is per-

mitted at all, is despotically controlled with a view solely to military efficiency.

Well, nowadays it is not the King that rules, but the tinker. Dynastic wars are no longer feared, dynastic alliances no longer valued. Marriages in royal families are becoming rapidly less political, and more popular, domestic, and romantic. If all the kings in Europe were made as free tomorrow as King Cophetua,¹ nobody but their aunts and chamberlains would feel a moment's anxiety as to the consequences. On the other hand a sense of the social importance of the tinker's marriage has been steadily growing. We have made a public matter of his wife's health in the month after her confinement. We have taken the minds of his children out of his hands and put them into those of our State schoolmaster. We shall presently make their bodily nourishment independent of him. But they are still riff-raff; and to hand the country over to riff-raff is national suicide, since riff-raff can neither govern nor will let anyone else govern except the highest bidder of bread and circuses. There is no public enthusiast alive of twenty years' practical democratic experience who believes in the political adequacy of the electorate or of the bodies it elects. The overthrow of the aristocrat has created the necessity for the Superman.

Englishmen hate Liberty and Equality too much to understand them. But every Englishman loves and desires a pedigree. And in that he is right. King Demos must be bred like all other Kings; and with Must there is no arguing. It is idle for an individual writer to carry so great a matter further in a pamphlet. A conference on the subject is the next step needed. It will be attended by men and women who, no longer believing that they can live for ever, are seeking for some immortal work into which they can build the best of themselves before their refuse is thrown into that arch dust destructor, the cremation furnace.

MAXIMS FOR REVOLUTIONISTS

THE GOLDEN RULE

Do not do unto others as you would that they should do unto you. Their tastes may not be the same.

Never resist temptation: prove all things; hold fast that which is good.²

Do not love your neighbor as yourself. If

¹ Who married a beggar maid.

² See *I Thessalonians*, 5:21.

you are on good terms with yourself it is an impertinence: if on bad, an injury.

The golden rule is that there are no golden rules.

IDOLATRY

The art of government is the organization of idolatry.

The bureaucracy consists of functionaries; the aristocracy, of idols; the democracy, of idolaters.

The populace cannot understand the bureaucracy: it can only worship the national idols.

The savage bows down to idols of wood and stone: the civilized man to idols of flesh and blood.

A limited monarchy is a device for combining the inertia of a wooden idol with the credibility of a flesh and blood one.

When the wooden idol does not answer the peasant's prayer, he beats it: when the flesh and blood idol does not satisfy the civilized man, he cuts its head off.

He who slays a king and he who dies for him are alike idolaters.

ROYALTY

Kings are not born: they are made by artificial hallucination. When the process is interrupted by adversity at a critical age, as in the case of Charles II, the subject becomes sane and never completely recovers his kingliness.

The Court is the servant's hall of the sovereign.

Vulgarity in a king flatters the majority of the nation.

The flunkeyism propagated by the throne is the price we pay for its political convenience.

DEMOCRACY

If the lesser mind could measure the greater as a footrule can measure a pyramid, there would be finality in universal suffrage. As it is, the political problem remains unsolved.

Democracy substitutes selection by the incompetent many for appointment by the corrupt few.

Democratic republics can no more dispense with national idols than monarchies with public functionaries.

Government presents only one problem: the discovery of a trustworthy anthropometric method.

IMPERIALISM

Excess of insularity makes a Briton an Imperialist.

Excess of local self-assertion makes a colonist an Imperialist.

A colonial Imperialist is one who raises colonial troops, equips a colonial squadron, claims a Federal Parliament sending its measures to the Throne instead of to the Colonial Office, and, being finally brought by this means into insoluble conflict with the insular British Imperialist, "cuts the painter" and breaks up the Empire.

LIBERTY AND EQUALITY

He who confuses political liberty with freedom and political equality with similarity has never thought for five minutes about either.

Nothing can be unconditional: consequently nothing can be free.

Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it.

The duke inquires contemptuously whether his gamekeeper is the equal of the Astronomer Royal; but he insists that they shall both be hanged equally if they murder him.

The notion that the colonel need be a better man than the private is as confused as the notion that the keystone need be stronger than the coping stone.

Where equality is undisputed, so also is subordination.

Equality is fundamental in every department of social organization.

The relation of superior to inferior excludes good manners.

EDUCATION

When a man teaches something he does not know to somebody else who has no aptitude for it, and gives him a certificate of proficiency, the latter has completed the education of a gentleman.

A fool's brain digests philosophy into folly, science into superstition, and art into pedantry. Hence University education.

The best brought-up children are those who have seen their parents as they are. Hypocrisy is not the parent's first duty.

The vilest abortionist is he who attempts to mould a child's character.

At the University every great treatise is postponed until its author attains impartial judgment and perfect knowledge. If a horse could wait as long for its shoes and would pay for them in advance, our blacksmiths would all be college dons.

He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches.

A learned man is an idler who kills time with study. Beware of his false knowledge: it is more dangerous than ignorance.

Activity is the only road to knowledge.

Every fool believes what his teachers tell him, and calls his credulity science or morality as confidently as his father called it divine revelation.

No man fully capable of his own language ever masters another.

No man can be a pure specialist without being in the strict sense an idiot.

Do not give your children moral and religious instruction unless you are quite sure they will not take it too seriously. Better be the mother of Henri Quatre and Nell Gwynne than of Robespierre and Queen Mary Tudor.

MARRIAGE

Marriage is popular because it combines the maximum of temptation with the maximum of opportunity.

Marriage is the only legal contract which abrogates as between the parties all the laws that safeguard the particular relation to which it refers.

The essential function of marriage is the continuance of the race, as stated in the Book of Common Prayer.¹

The accidental function of marriage is the gratification of the amoristic sentiment of mankind.

The artificial sterilization of marriage makes it possible for marriage to fulfil its accidental function whilst neglecting its essential one.

The most revolutionary invention of the XIX century was the artificial sterilization of marriage.

Any marriage system which condemns a majority of the population to celibacy will be violently wrecked on the pretext that it outrages morality.

Polygamy, when tried under modern democratic conditions, as by the Mormons, is wrecked by the revolt of the mass of inferior men who are condemned to celibacy by it; for the maternal instinct leads a woman to prefer a tenth share in a first rate man to the exclusive possession of a third rate one. Polyandry has been tried under these conditions.

The minimum of national celibacy (ascertained by dividing the number of males in the community by the number of females,

and taking the quotient as the number of wives or husbands permitted to each person) is secured in England (where the quotient is 1) by the institution of monogamy.

The modern sentimental term for the national minimum of celibacy is Purity.

Marriage, or any other form of promiscuous amoristic monogamy, is fatal to large States because it puts its ban on the deliberate breeding of man as a political animal.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

All scoundrelism is summed up in the phrase "Que Messieurs les Assassins commencent!"¹

The man who has graduated from the flogging block at Eton to the bench from which he sentences the garotter to be flogged is the same social product as the garotter who has been kicked by his father and cuffed by his mother until he has grown strong enough to throttle and rob the rich citizen whose money he desires.

Imprisonment is as irrevocable as death.

Criminals do not die by the hands of the law. They die by the hands of other men.

The assassin Czolgosz made President McKinley a hero by assassinating him. The United States of America made Czolgosz a hero by the same process.

Assassination on the scaffold is the worst form of assassination, because there it is invested with the approval of society.

It is the deed that teaches, not the name we give it. Murder and capital punishment are not opposites that cancel one another, but similars that breed their kind.

Crime is only the retail department of what, in wholesale, we call penal law.

When a man wants to murder a tiger he calls it sport: when the tiger wants to murder him he calls it ferocity. The distinction between Crime and Justice is no greater.

Whilst we have prisons it matters little which of us occupy the cells.

The most anxious man in a prison is the governor.

It is not necessary to replace a guillotined criminal: it is necessary to replace a guillotined social system.

TITLES

Titles distinguish the mediocre, embarrass the superior, and are disgraced by the inferior.

Great men refuse titles because they are jealous of them.

¹ The Prayer Book of the Church of England, but the Prayer Book of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States does not contain the statement.

¹ From an article published in January, 1849, by Alphonse Karr, defending capital punishment. He made the point that if it were desirable to abolish the death penalty, "Let the murderers begin!"

HONOR

There are no perfectly honorable men; but every true man has one main point of honor and a few minor ones.

You cannot believe in honor until you have achieved it. Better keep yourself clean and bright: you are the window through which you must see the world.

Your word can never be as good as your bond, because your memory can never be as trustworthy as your honor.

PROPERTY

Property, said Proudhon, is theft. This is the only perfect truism that has been uttered on the subject.

SERVANTS

When domestic servants are treated as human beings it is not worth while to keep them.

The relation of master and servant is advantageous only to masters who do not scruple to abuse their authority, and to servants who do not scruple to abuse their trust.

The perfect servant, when his master makes humane advances to him, feels that his existence is threatened, and hastens to change his place.

Masters and servants are both tyrannical; but the masters are the more dependent of the two.

A man enjoys what he uses, not what his servants use.

Man is the only animal which esteems itself rich in proportion to the number and voracity of its parasites.

Ladies and gentlemen are permitted to have friends in the kennel, but not in the kitchen.

Domestic servants, by making spoiled children of their masters, are forced to intimidate them in order to be able to live with them.

In a slave state, the slaves rule; in Mayfair, the tradesman rules.

HOW TO BEAT CHILDREN

If you strike a child, take care that you strike it in anger, even at the risk of maiming it for life. A blow in cold blood neither can nor should be forgiven.

If you beat children for pleasure, avow your object frankly, and play the game according to the rules, as a foxhunter does; and you will do comparatively little harm. No foxhunter is such a cad as to pretend that he hunts the fox to teach it not to steal chickens, or that he suffers more acutely than

the fox at the death. Remember that even in childbeating there is the sportsman's way and the cad's way.

RELIGION

Beware of the man whose god is in the skies.

What a man believes may be ascertained, not from his creed, but from the assumptions on which he habitually acts.

VIRTUES AND VICES

No specific virtue or vice in a man implies the existence of any other specific virtue or vice in him, however closely the imagination may associate them.

Virtue consists, not in abstaining from vice, but in not desiring it.

Self-denial is not a virtue: it is only the effect of prudence on rascality.

Obedience simulates subordination as fear of the police simulates honesty.

Disobedience, the rarest and most courageous of the virtues, is seldom distinguished from neglect, the laziest and commonest of the vices.

Vice is waste of life. Poverty, obedience, and celibacy are the canonical vices.

Economy is the art of making the most of life.

The love of economy is the root of all virtue.

FAIRPLAY

The love of fairplay is a spectator's virtue, not a principal's.

GREATNESS

Greatness is only one of the sensations of littleness.

In heaven an angel is nobody in particular.

Greatness is the secular name for Divinity: both mean simply what lies beyond us.

If a great man could make us understand him, we should hang him.

We admit that when the divinity we worshipped made itself visible and comprehensible we crucified it.

To a mathematician the eleventh means only a single unit: to the bushman who cannot count further than his ten fingers it is an incalculable myriad.

The difference between the shallowest routinier and the deepest thinker appears, to the latter, trifling; to the former, infinite.

In a stupid nation the man of genius becomes a god: everybody worships him and nobody does his will.

BEAUTY AND HAPPINESS, ART AND RICHES

Happiness and Beauty are by-products.

Folly is the direct pursuit of Happiness and Beauty.

Riches and Art are spurious receipts for the production of Happiness and Beauty.

He who desires a lifetime of happiness with a beautiful woman desires to enjoy the taste of wine by keeping his mouth always full of it.

The most intolerable pain is produced by prolonging the keenest pleasure.

The man with toothache thinks everyone happy whose teeth are sound. The poverty-stricken man makes the same mistake about the rich man.

The more a man possesses over and above what he uses, the more careworn he becomes.

The tyranny that forbids you to make the road with pick and shovel is worse than that which prevents you from lolling along in a carriage and pair.

In an ugly and unhappy world the richest man can purchase nothing but ugliness and unhappiness.

In his efforts to escape from ugliness and unhappiness the rich man intensifies both. Every new yard of West End creates a new acre of East End.¹

The XIX century was the Age of Faith in Fine Art. The results are before us.

THE PERFECT GENTLEMAN

The fatal reservation of the gentleman is that he sacrifices everything to his honor except his gentility.

A gentleman of our days is one who has money enough to do what every fool would do if he could afford it: that is, consume without producing.

The true diagnostic of modern gentility is parasitism.

No elaboration of physical or moral accomplishment can atone for the sin of parasitism.

A modern gentleman is necessarily the enemy of his country. Even in war he does not fight to defend it, but to prevent his power of preying on it from passing to a foreigner. Such combatants are patriots in the same sense as two dogs fighting for a bone are lovers of animals.

The North American Indian was a type of the sportsman warrior gentleman. The Periclean Athenian was a type of the intellectually and artistically cultivated gen-

tleman. Both were political failures. The modern gentleman, without the hardihood of the one or the culture of the other, has the appetite of both put together. He will not succeed where they failed.

He who believes in education, criminal law, and sport, needs only property to make him a perfect modern gentleman.

MODERATION

Moderation is never applauded for its own sake.

A moderately honest man with a moderately faithful wife, moderate drinkers both, in a moderately healthy house: that is the true middle class unit.

THE UNCONSCIOUS SELF

The unconscious self is the real genius. Your breathing goes wrong the moment your conscious self meddles with it.

Except during the nine months before he draws his first breath, no man manages his affairs as well as a tree does.

REASON

The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man.

The man who listens to Reason is lost: Reason enslaves all whose minds are not strong enough to master her.

DECENCY

Decency is Indecency's Conspiracy of Silence.

EXPERIENCE

Men are wise in proportion, not to their experience, but to their capacity for experience.

If we could learn from mere experience, the stones of London would be wiser than its wisest men.

TIME'S REVENGES

Those whom we call brutes had their revenge when Darwin shewed us that they are our cousins.

The thieves had their revenge when Marx convicted the bourgeoisie of theft.

GOOD INTENTIONS

Hell is paved with good intentions, not bad ones.

All men mean well.

¹ London's rich live in the West End; her poor in the East End.

NATURAL RIGHTS

The Master of Arts, by proving that no man has any natural rights, compels himself to take his own for granted.

The right to live is abused whenever it is not constantly challenged.

FAUTE DE MIEUX

In my childhood I demurred to the description of a certain young lady as "the pretty Miss So and So." My Aunt rebuked me by saying "Remember always that the least plain sister is the family beauty."

No age or condition is without its heroes. The least incapable general in a nation is its Cæsar, the least imbecile statesman its Solon, the least confused thinker its Socrates, the least commonplace poet its Shakespear.

CHARITY

Charity is the most mischievous sort of pruriency.

Those who minister to poverty and disease are accomplices in the two worst of all the crimes.

He who gives money he has not earned is generous with other people's labor.

Every genuinely benevolent person loathes almsgiving and mendicity.

FAME

Life levels all men: death reveals the eminent.

DISCIPLINE

Mutiny Acts are needed only by officers who command without authority. Divine right needs no whip.

WOMEN IN THE HOME

Home is the girl's prison and the woman's workhouse.

CIVILIZATION

Civilization is a disease produced by the practice of building societies with rotten material.

Those who admire modern civilization usually identify it with the steam engine and the electric telegraph.

Those who understand the steam engine and the electric telegraph spend their lives in trying to replace them with something better.

The imagination cannot conceive a viler criminal than he who should build another London like the present one, nor a greater benefactor than he who should destroy it.

GAMBLING

The most popular method of distributing wealth is the method of the roulette table.

The roulette table pays nobody except him that keeps it. Nevertheless a passion for gaming is common, though a passion for keeping roulette tables is unknown.

Gambling promises the poor what Property performs for the rich: that is why the bishops dare not denounce it fundamentally.

THE SOCIAL QUESTION

Do not waste your time on Social Questions. What is the matter with the poor is Poverty: what is the matter with the rich is Uselessness.

STRAY SAYINGS

We are told that when Jehovah created the world he saw that it was good. What would he say now?

The conversion of a savage to Christianity is the conversion of Christianity to savagery.

No man dares say so much of what he thinks as to appear to himself an extremist.

Mens sana in corpore sano is a foolish saying. The sound body is a product of the sound mind.

Decadence can find agents only when it wears the mask of progress.

In moments of progress the noble succeed, because things are going their way: in moments of decadence the base succeed for the same reason: hence the world is never without the exhilaration of contemporary success.

The reformer for whom the world is not good enough finds himself shoulder to shoulder with him that is not good enough for the world.

Every man over forty is a scoundrel.

Youth, which is forgiven everything, forgives itself nothing: age, which forgives itself everything, is forgiven nothing.

When we learn to sing that Britons never will be masters we shall make an end of slavery.

Do not mistake your objection to defeat for an objection to fighting, your objection to being a slave for an objection to slavery, your objection to not being as rich as your neighbor for an objection to poverty. The cowardly, the insubordinate, and the envious share your objections.

Take care to get what you like or you will be forced to like what you get. Where there is no ventilation fresh air is declared

unwholesome. Where there is no religion hypocrisy becomes good taste. Where there is no knowledge ignorance calls itself science.

If the wicked flourish and the fittest survive, Nature must be the God of rascals.

If history repeats itself, and the unexpected always happens, how incapable must Man be of learning from experience!

Compassion is the fellow-feeling of the unsound.

Those who understand evil pardon it: those who resent it destroy it.

Acquired notions of propriety are stronger than natural instincts. It is easier to recruit for monasteries and convents than to induce an Arab woman to uncover her mouth in public, or a British officer to walk through Bond Street in a golfing cap on an afternoon in May.

It is dangerous to be sincere unless you are also stupid.

The Chinese tame fowls by clipping their wings, and women by deforming their feet. A petticoat round the ankles serves equally well.

Political Economy and Social Economy

are amusing intellectual games; but Vital Economy is the Philosopher's Stone.

When a heretic wishes to avoid martyrdom he speaks of "Orthodoxy, True and False" and demonstrates that the True is his heresy.

Beware of the man who does not return your blow: he neither forgives you nor allows you to forgive yourself.

If you injure your neighbor, better not do it by halves.

Sentimentality is the error of supposing that quarter can be given or taken in moral conflicts.

Two starving men cannot be twice as hungry as one; but two rascals can be ten times as vicious as one.

Make your cross your crutch; but when you see another man do it, beware of him.

SELF-SACRIFICE

Self-sacrifice enables us to sacrifice other people without blushing.

If you begin by sacrificing yourself to those you love, you will end by hating those to whom you have sacrificed yourself.

THE END

RIDERS TO THE SEA*

By

JOHN MILLINGTON SYNGE

"**H** E BELONGED TO THOSE WHO, LIKE Wordsworth, like Coleridge, like Goldsmith, like Keats, have little personality, as far as the casual eye can see, little personal will, but fiery brooding imagination." These words, from Synge's closest friend, W. B. Yeats, give the clue to the character and work of this almost unknowable dramatist.

At first sight, a play by Synge appears to be the work of an unschooled and primitive observer who reports, as if by chance, with the instinct of genius for the significant. Synge, on the contrary, was almost moribund with education and culture before he discovered the true bent of his faculties. He had become proficient in music, well-read in four languages, and classically inclined to the point of composing a worshipful study of Racine, when Yeats "discovered" him in a Paris garret. The previous year, however, Synge had come under the spell of life in the Aran Islands. Yeats had little difficulty in winning him from his "literary" pursuits to join the young Irish renaissance and to return to the Aran Islands for his material.

Few dramatists have come to their task with a wider background or set about it in a more workmanlike manner. First, he observed and made copious notes, then selected and compressed, and finally shaped with unerring craftsmanship. In method, he seems never to have experimented, but to have created with perfect mastery from the beginning.

In 1902, John Masefield found him in London at work on his first plays, probably *The Tinker's Wedding*, *In the Shadow of the Glen*, and *Riders to the Sea*. The English poet described him as "a strange personality," with a face "dark from gravity," as though "the man behind were forever listening to life's case before passing judgment." His voice had "a kind of lively bitterness in it." This dour exterior was offset by "a humorous mouth, the kindling in the eyes

and something robust in his build." In conversation, though always polite, "he offered nothing of his own." His interest was "in life, not in ideas." He composed slowly on a typewriter and rewrote each play several times. Friends gathered to hear his first plays read, and from their verdict "Synge learned his métier that night."

In the Shadow of the Glen was given by the newly organized Irish National Theatre Company on October 8, 1903. In 1904, this company moved into its now famous home, the Abbey Theatre, and appointed Synge to cooperate with W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory as adviser. He gave the rest of his life to this enterprise. His *Riders to the Sea* was produced that year. The hostility that Synge's work created is now difficult to understand, but it proved to be excellent publicity, and, what was more important, it fired the workers for the Theatre with loyalty to their artistic standards and with the fighting spirit. *In the Shadow of the Glen* had profaned the romantic conception of Ireland's womanhood and *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907) had spoiled the idyllic belief in the Irish peasant's unsullied virtue. Synge was astonished at the turmoil he had unsuspectingly aroused and his already weakened constitution was severely strained. He had counted too much on the Irish sense of humor. The loyalty of W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory and their faith in his ultimate triumph are among the brightest records of modern drama. A futile operation cut short his life before his sixth play, *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, had been completed. He died in a nursing home on March 24, 1909.

In Synge's plays, the poetic and dramatic insight of the reader is subjected to a searching test. They depend hardly at all on the unessential—theatricality, exploitation of ideas, moralizing, and sentimentality. They are rather the work of the true poet-dramatist who substitutes for theatrical mechanism the reality of life itself, reporting it not photographically, but with a sensitive discernment for dramatic values, for color,

* Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.

rhythm, and form, and, above all, for psychological reality. It is, therefore, easy to fall into George Moore's rather snobbish error of pronouncing *Riders to the Sea*, for instance, essentially undramatic because of the absence of obvious theatrical conflict. If, however, the dramatic greatness of *Œdipus*, *Hamlet*, *Faustus*, and *The Misanthrope* lies not in their externals but in their presentation of a progressive spiritual reaction to an inscrutable destiny, by means of perfectly conceived characters and dialogue truthfully colored, then *Riders to the Sea* is the masterpiece it has been pronounced. One must, however, read all of Synge to appreciate his breadth and versatility. The wild riot of humor in *The Playboy* and *The Tinker's Wedding* is, perhaps, truer to his mentality than the tragic beauty of *Riders to the Sea*.

He wrote comparatively little about himself and was not inclined to abstract thinking even about his art. What he wrote was, nevertheless, highly significant and true to the best critical standards.

COMMENTS CONCERNING DRAMA

"The drama is made serious, in the French sense of the word, not by the degree in which it is taken up with problems that are serious in themselves, but by the degree in which it gives the nourishment, not very easy to define, on which our imaginations live. . . . In these days, the playhouse is too often stocked with the drugs of many seedy problems, or with the absinthe or vermouth of the last musical comedy. Of the things that nourish the imagination, humor is one of the most needful."

"The drama, like the symphony, does not teach or prove anything. Analysts with their problems, and teachers with their systems, are soon as old-fashioned as the pharmacopœia of Galen—look at Ibsen and the Germans—but the best plays of Ben Jonson and Molière can no more go out of fashion than the blackberries on the hedges."

Preface to *The Tinker's Wedding*.

"In writing *The Playboy of the Western World*, as in my other plays, I have used one or two words only that I have not heard among the country people of Ireland, or spoken in my own nursery before I could read the newspapers. . . . I am glad to acknowledge how much I owe to the folk imagination of these fine people."

"All art is a collaboration, and there is little doubt that in the happy ages of literature, striking and beautiful phrases were as

ready to the story-teller's or the playwright's hand, as the rich cloaks and dresses of his time. I got more aid than any learning could have given me from a chink in the floor of the old Wicklow house where I was staying, that let me hear what was being said by the servant girls in the kitchen."

"On the stage, one must have reality and one must have joy, and that is why the intellectual modern drama has failed. . . . the joy found only in what is superb and wild in reality. In a good play every speech should be as fully flavored as a nut or apple, and such speeches cannot be written by anyone who works among people who have shut their lips on poetry. In Ireland, for a few years more, we have a popular imagination that is fiery, and magnificent, and tender."

Preface to *The Playboy of the Western World*.

PRODUCTION

Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen* was presented in a small and badly adapted hall on October 8, 1903, as one of the first offerings of the newly formed Irish National Theatre Company, and *Riders to the Sea* was produced by the same company in 1904 after the opening of their Abbey Theatre. This Theatre, now among the most famous of modern playhouses, and the first government subsidized theatre in the English-speaking world, was presented outright for a period of five years by Miss A. E. F. Horniman, who had been deeply impressed by the work of the Irish players when they appeared the previous year at Queen's Gate Hall in London. The auditorium, dating from 1820, seated 562 persons, and was in the horseshoe form with one balcony. The stage was only fifteen feet deep. The curtain was black with gold stripes and the signal for its rising was a deep-toned gong. Original lighting, by no means elaborate, produced a glow, rather than a glare, giving an artistic effect that was perhaps not calculated.

The style of acting which the company developed was something new in the theatre of its period and was immediately recognized as artistically superior to anything known in the professional theatre. The brothers Fay, who headed the work of production, contributed a professional but not conventional tone to the work of this unpaid and amateur troupe. Frank Fay, skilled in speech production, insisted from the beginning upon a musical and vigorous delivery that has always distinguished the work of the company. It imparted to prose, especially that of Synge, the rhythm and tonal-

ity of poetry, as was clearly the author's intention, but never to the extent of losing its simple naturalism. Of one of Synge's plays given at this theater George Moore wrote: "I would call attention to the abundance of the beauty of the dialogue, to the fact that one listened to it as one listens to music, charmed by the inevitableness of the words and the ease with which phrase is linked with phrase. . . . Mr. Synge has also discovered great literature in barbarous idiom as gold is discovered in quartz."

When the company played in London, inviting direct comparison with the expert acting of the reigning naturalistic school, the London critics were even more impressed. A. B. Walkley, of the *Times*, found the effect produced "quite outside the range of anything which those houses (the public theaters) have to offer." He noted espe-

cially their naturalness that appeared artless, although in reality it was carefully studied: "They stand stock still," he wrote; "the speaker of the moment is the only one who is allowed a little gesture. . . . The listeners do not distract one's attention with fussy stage business; they just stay where they are and listen."

A writer in the *Manchester Guardian* caught the significance of the new art: "These Irish actors have contrived to reach back past most of the futilities that have grown upon the ordinary theater of commerce and get a fresh, clean hold on their craft in its elements. They know how to let things alone, how to stand still when nothing is to be done . . . how to save up the voice and gesture for rare and brief passages of real poignancy, how to fade into the background."

JOHN MILLINGTON SYNGE

Born 1871, Newton Little, near Dublin.

Son of a thrifty landowner.

Studied music and prepared with tutors for Trinity College, Dublin.

1892, Degree of A.B., Trinity College. Prize in harmony and counterpoint at the Royal Irish Academy.

1893, Continued study of music in Germany.

1894, Abandoned music for a literary career in Paris.

1896, Toured Italy.

1898, Visited the Aran Islands.

1899, Discovered in Paris by W. B. Yeats, who advised him to abandon literary criticism for a life of creative writing, and to return to the Aran Islands for his material.

1902, Worked on his first plays in London.

1903, *In the Shadow of the Glen* produced by the Irish National Theatre Company.

1904, Made adviser of this company in their new Abbey Theatre.

1909, Died after an operation for a cancerous growth.

PLAYS

1903 *In the Shadow of the Glen*. 1904 *Riders to the Sea*. 1905 *The Well of the Saints*. 1907 *The Playboy of the Western World*. 1909 *The Tinker's Wedding* (published, but written earlier). 1910 *Deirdre of the Sorrows* (published).

WRITINGS ON DRAMA

Preface to *The Playboy of the Western World*, 1907. Preface to *The Tinker's Wedding*, 1909.

RIDERS TO THE SEA

Characters

MAURYA, an old woman.
BARTLEY, her son.

CATHLEEN, her daughter. *20*
NORA, a younger daughter. *young girl*
MEN and WOMEN.

SCENE: *An island off the West of Ireland. Cottage kitchen, with nets, oilskins, spinning-wheel, some new boards standing by the wall, etc.* CATHLEEN, a girl of about twenty, finishes kneading cake, and puts it down in the pot-oven by the fire; then wipes her hands, and begins to spin at the wheel. NORA, a young girl, puts her head in at the door.

Nora. [*In a low voice.*] Where is she?

Cathleen. She's lying down, God help her, and may be sleeping, if she's able.

[NORA comes in softly, and takes a bundle from under her shawl.]

Cathleen. [*Spinning the wheel rapidly.*] What is it you have?

Nora. The young priest is after bringing them. It's a shirt and a plain stocking were got off a drowned man in Donegal.

[CATHLEEN stops her wheel with a sudden movement, and leans out to listen.]

Nora. We're to find out if it's Michael's they are, some time herself will be down looking by the sea.

Cathleen. How would they be Michael's, Nora? How would he go the length of that way to the far north?

Nora. The young priest says he's known the like of it. "If it's Michael's they are," says he, "you can tell herself he's got a clean burial by the grace of God, and if they're not his, let no one say a word about them, for she'll be getting her death," says he, "with crying and lamenting."

[The door which NORA half closed is blown open by a gust of wind.]

Cathleen. [*Looking out anxiously.*] Did you ask him would he stop Bartley going this day with the horses to the Galway fair?

Nora. "I won't stop him," says he, "but let you not be afraid. Herself does be saying prayers half through the night, and the Almighty God won't leave her destitute," says he, "with no son living."

Cathleen. Is the sea bad by the white rocks, Nora?

Nora. Middling bad, God help us. There's a great roaring in the west, and it's worse it'll be getting when the tide's turned to the wind. [*She goes over to the table with the bundle.*] Shall I open it now?

Cathleen. Maybe she'd wake up on us, and come in before we'd done. [*Coming to the table.*] It's a long time we'll be, and the two of us crying.

Nora. [*Goes to the inner door and listens.*] She's moving about on the bed. She'll be coming in a minute.

Cathleen. Give me the ladder, and I'll put them up in the turf-loft, the way she won't know of them at all, and maybe when the tide turns she'll be going down to see would he be floating from the east.

[*They put the ladder against the gable of the chimney; CATHLEEN goes up a few steps and hides the bundle in the turf-loft. MAURYA comes in from the inner room.*]

Maurya. [*Looking up at CATHLEEN and speaking querulously.*] Isn't it turf enough you have for this day and evening?

Cathleen. There's a cake baking at the fire for a short space [*Throwing down the turf.*] and Bartley will want it when the tide turns if he goes to Connemara.

[NORA picks up the turf and puts it round the pot-oven.]

Maurya. [*Sitting down on a stool at the fire.*] He won't go this day with the wind rising from the south and west. He won't go this day, for the young priest will stop him surely.

Nora. He'll not stop him, Mother, and I heard Eamon Simon and Stephen Pheety and Colum Shawn saying he would go.

Maurya. Where is he itself?

Nora. He went down to see would there be another boat sailing in the week, and I'm thinking it won't be long till he's here now, for the tide's turning at the green head, and the hooker's tacking from the east.

Cathleen. I hear some one passing the big stones.

Nora. [*Looking out.*] He's coming now, and he in a hurry.

Bartley. [*Comes in and looks round the room. Speaking sadly and quietly.*] Where is the bit of new rope, Cathleen, was bought in Connemara?

Cathleen. [*Coming down.*] Give it to him, Nora; it's on a nail by the white boards. I hung it up this morning, for the pig with the black feet was eating it.

Nora. [*Giving him a rope.*] Is that it, Bartley?

Maurya. You'd do right to leave that rope, Bartley, hanging by the boards. [*BARTLEY takes the rope.*] It will be wanting in this place, I'm telling you, if Michael is washed up tomorrow morning, or the next morning, or any morning in the week, for it's a deep grave we'll make him by the grace of God.

Bartley. [*Beginning to work with the rope.*] I've no halter the way I can ride down on the mare, and I must go now quickly. This is the one boat going for two weeks or beyond it, and the fair will be a good fair for horses. I heard them saying below.

Maurya. It's a hard thing they'll be saying below if the body is washed up and there's no man in it to make the coffin, and I after giving a big price for the finest white boards you'd find in Connemara.

[*She looks around at the boards.*]

Bartley. How would it be washed up, and we after looking each day for nine days, and a strong wind blowing a while back from the west and south?

Maurya. If it wasn't found itself, that wind is raising the sea, and there was a star up against the moon, and it rising in the night. If it was a hundred horses, or a thousand horses you had itself, what is the price of a thousand horses against a son where there is one son only?

Bartley. [*Working at the halter, to CATHLEEN.*] Let you go down each day, and see the sheep aren't jumping in on the rye, and if the jobber comes you can sell the pig with the black feet if there is a good price going.

Maurya. How would the like of her get a good price for a pig?

Bartley. [*To CATHLEEN.*] If the west wind holds with the last bit of the moon let you and Nora get up weed enough for another cock for the kelp. It's hard set we'll be from this day with no one in it but one man to work.

Maurya. It's hard set we'll be surely the day you're drown'd with the rest. What

way will I live and the girls with me, and I an old woman looking for the grave?

[*BARTLEY lays down the halter, takes off his old coat, and puts on a newer one of the same flannel.*]

Bartley. [*To NORA.*] Is she coming to the pier?

Nora. [*Looking out.*] She's passing the green head and letting fall her sails.

Bartley. [*Getting his purse and tobacco.*] I'll have half an hour to go down, and you'll see me coming again in two days, or in three days, or maybe in four days if the wind is bad.

Maurya. [*Turning around to the fire, and putting her shawl over her head.*] Isn't it a hard and cruel man won't hear a word from an old woman, and she holding him from the sea?

Cathleen. It's the life of a young man to be going on the sea, and who would listen to an old woman with one thing and she saying it over?

Bartley. [*Taking the halter.*] I must go now quickly. I'll ride down on the red mare, and the gray pony'll run behind me. . . . The blessing of God on you.

[*He goes out.*]

Maurya. [*Crying out as he is in the door.*] He's gone now, God spare us, and we'll not see him again. He's gone now, and when the black night is falling I'll have no son left me in the world.

Cathleen. Why wouldn't you give him your blessing and he looking round in the door? Isn't it sorrow enough is on every one in this house without your sending him out with an unlucky word behind him, and a hard word in his ear?

[*MAURYA takes up the tongs and begins raking the fire aimlessly without looking around.*]

Nora. [*Turning toward her.*] You're taking away the turf from the cake.

Cathleen. [*Crying out.*] The Son of God forgive us, Nora, we're after forgetting his bit of bread. [*She comes over to the fire.*]

Nora. And it's destroyed he'll be going till dark night, and he after eating nothing since the sun went up.

Cathleen. [*Turning the cake out of the oven.*] It's destroyed he'll be, surely. There's no sense left in any person in a house where an old woman will be talking forever.

[*MAURYA sways herself on her stool.*]

Cathleen. [*Cutting off some of the bread and rolling it in a cloth; to MAURYA.*] Let you go down now to the spring well and give him this and he passing. You'll see him then

and the dark word will be broken, and you can say "God speed you," the way he'll be easy in his mind.

Maurya. [Taking the bread.] Will I be in it as soon as himself?

Cathleen. If you go now quickly.

Maurya. [Standing up unsteadily.] It's hard set I am to walk.

Cathleen. [Looking at her anxiously.] Give her the stick, Nora, or maybe she'll slip on the big stones.

Nora. What stick?

Cathleen. The stick Michael brought from Connemara.

Maurya. [Taking a stick NORA gives her.] In the big world the old people do be leaving things after them for their sons and children, but in this place it is the young men do be leaving things behind for them that do be old.

[She goes out slowly. NORA goes over to the ladder.]

Cathleen. Wait, Nora, maybe she'd turn back quickly. She's that sorry, God help her, you wouldn't know the thing she'd do.

Nora. Is she gone round by the bush?

Cathleen. [Looking out.] She's gone now. Throw it down quickly, for the Lord knows when she'll be out of it again.

Nora. [Getting the bundle from the left.] The young priest said he'd be passing tomorrow, and we might go down and speak to him below if it's Michael's they are surely.

Cathleen. [Taking the bundle.] Did he say what way they were found?

Nora. [Coming down.] "There were two men," says he, "and they rowing round with poteen before the cocks crowed, and the oar of one of them caught the body, and they passing the black cliffs of the north."

Cathleen. [Trying to open the bundle.] Give me a knife, Nora, the string's perished with the salt water, and here's a black knot on it you wouldn't loosen in a week.

Nora. [Giving her a knife.] I've heard tell it was a long way to Donegal.

Cathleen. [Cutting the string.] It is surely. There was a man in here a while ago—the man sold us that knife—and he said if you set off walking from the rocks beyond, it would be seven days you'd be in Donegal.

Nora. And what time would a man take, and he floating?

[CATHLEEN opens the bundle and takes out a bit of stocking. They look at them eagerly.]

Cathleen. [In a low voice.] The Lord spare us, Nora! Isn't it a queer hard thing to say if it's his they are surely?

Nora. I'll get his shirt off the hook the way we can put the one flannel on the other. *[She looks through some clothes hanging in the corner.]* It's not with them, Cathleen, and where will it be?

Cathleen. I'm thinking Bartley put it on him in the morning, for his own shirt was heavy with the salt in it. *[Pointing to the corner.]* There's a bit of a sleeve was of the same stuff. Give me that and it will do.

[NORA brings it to her and they compare the flannel.]

Cathleen. It's the same stuff, Nora; but if it is itself aren't there great rolls of it in the shops of Galway, and isn't it many another man may have a shirt of it as well as Michael himself?

Nora. [Who has taken up the stocking and counted the stitches, crying out.] It's Michael, Cathleen, it's Michael; God spare his soul, and what will herself say when she hears this story, and Bartley on the sea?

Cathleen. [Taking the stocking.] It's a plain stocking.

Nora. It's the second one of the third pair I knitted, and I put up three score stitches, and I dropped four of them.

Cathleen. [Counts the stitches.] It's that number is in it. *[Crying out.]* Ah, Nora, isn't it a bitter thing to think of him floating that way to the far north, and no one to keen him but the black hags that do be flying on the sea?

Nora. [Swinging herself around, and throwing out her arms on the clothes.] And isn't it a pitiful thing when there is nothing left of a man who was a great rower and fisher, but a bit of an old shirt and a plain stocking?

Cathleen. [After an instant.] Tell me, is herself coming, Nora? I hear a little sound on the path.

Nora. [Looking out.] She is, Cathleen. She's coming up to the door.

Cathleen. Put these things away before she'll come in. Maybe it's easier she'll be after giving her blessing to Bartley, and we won't let on we've heard anything the time he's on the sea.

Nora. [Helping CATHLEEN to close the bundle.] We'll put them here in the corner.

[They put them into a hole in the chimney corner. CATHLEEN goes back to the spinning-wheel.]

Nora. Will she see it was crying I was?

Cathleen. Keep your back to the door the way the light'll not be on you.

[NORA sits down at the chimney corner, with her back to the door. MAURYA comes in very slowly, without looking

at the girls, and goes over to her stool at the other side of the fire. The cloth with the bread is still in her hand. The girls look at each other, and NORA points to the bundle of bread.]

Cathleen. [After spinning for a moment.] You didn't give him his bit of bread?

[MAURYA begins to keen softly, without turning around.]

Cathleen. Did you see him riding down?

[MAURYA goes on keening.]

Cathleen. [A little impatiently.] God forgive you; isn't it a better thing to raise your voice and tell what you seen, than to be making lamentation for a thing that's done? Did you see Bartley, I'm saying to you.

Maurya. [With a weak voice.] My heart's broken from this day.

Cathleen. [As before.] Did you see Bartley?

Maurya. I seen the fearfulest thing.

Cathleen. [Leaves her wheel and looks out.] God forgive you; he's riding the mare now over the green head, and the gray pony behind him.

Maurya. [Starts, so that her shawl falls back from her head and shows her white tossed hair. With a frightened voice.] The gray pony behind him.

Cathleen. [Coming to the fire.] What is it ails you, at all?

Maurya. [Speaking very slowly.] I've seen the fearfulest thing any person has seen, since the day Bride Dara seen the dead man with the child in his arms.

Cathleen and Nora. Uah.

[They crouch down in front of the old woman at the fire.]

Nora. Tell us what it is you seen.

Maurya. I went down to the spring well, and I stood there saying a prayer to myself. Then Bartley came along, and he riding on the red mare with the gray pony behind him. [She puts up her hands, as if to hide something from her eyes.] The Son of God spare us, Nora!

Cathleen. What is it you seen?

Maurya. I seen Michael himself.

Cathleen. [Speaking softly.] You did not, Mother. It wasn't Michael you seen, for his body is after being found in the far north, and he's got a clean burial by the grace of God.

Maurya. [A little defiantly.] I'm after seeing him this day, and he riding and galloping. Bartley came first on the red mare; and I tried to say "God speed you," but something choked the words in my throat. He went by quickly; and "the blessing of God on you," says he, and I could say nothing. I looked up then, and I crying, at the gray

pony, and there was Michael upon it—with fine clothes on him, and new shoes on his feet.

Cathleen. [Begins to keen.] It's destroyed we are from this day. It's destroyed, surely.

Nora. Didn't the young priest say the Almighty God wouldn't leave her destitute with no son living?

Maurya. [In a low voice, but clearly.] It's little the like of him knows of the sea. . . . Bartley will be lost now, and let you call in Eamon and make me a good coffin out of the white boards, for I won't live after them. I've had a husband, and a husband's father, and six sons in this house—six fine men, though it was a hard birth I had with every one of them and they coming to the world—and some of them were found and some of them were not found, but they're gone now, the lot of them. . . . There were Stephen, and Shawn, were lost in the great wind, and found after in the Bay of Gregory of the Golden Mouth, and carried up the two of them on the one plank, and in by that door.

[She pauses for a moment. The GIRLS start as if they heard something through the door that is half open behind them.]

Nora. [In a whisper.] Did you hear that, Cathleen? Did you hear a noise in the north-east?

Cathleen. [In a whisper.] There's some one after crying out by the seashore.

Maurya. [Continues without hearing anything.] There was Sheamus and his father, and his own father again, were lost in a dark night, and not a stick or sign was seen of them when the sun went up. There was Patch after was drowned out of a curagh that turned over. I was sitting here with Bartley, and he a baby, lying on my two knees, and I seen two women, and three women, and four women coming in, and they crossing themselves, and not saying a word. I looked out then, and there were men coming after them, and they holding a thing in the half of a red sail, and water dripping out of it—it was a dry day, Nora—and leaving a track to the door.

[She pauses again with her hand stretched out toward the door. It opens softly and OLD WOMEN begin to come in, crossing themselves on the threshold, and kneeling down in front of the stage with red petticoats over their heads.]

Maurya. [Half in a dream, to CATHLEEN.] Is it Patch, or Michael, or what is it at all?

Cathleen. Michael is after being found in the far north, and when he is found there how could he be here in this place?

Maurya. There does be a power of young

men floating round in the sea, and what way would they know if it was Michael they had, or another man like him, for when a man is nine days in the sea, and the wind blowing, it's hard set his own mother would be to say what man was it.

Cathleen. It's Michael, God spare him, for they're after sending us a bit of clothes from the far north.

[She reaches out and hands MAURYA the clothes that belong to MICHAEL. MAURYA stands up slowly, and takes them in her hands. NORA looks out.]

Nora. They're carrying a thing among them and there's water dripping out of it and leaving a track by the big stones.

Cathleen. *[In a whisper to the WOMEN who have come in.]* Is it Bartley it is?

One of the Women. It is surely, God rest his soul.

[Two YOUNGER WOMEN come in and pull out the table. Then MEN carry in the body of BARTLEY, laid on a plank, with a bit of a sail over it, and lay it on the table.]

Cathleen. *[To the WOMEN, as they are doing so.]* What way was he drowned?

One of the Women. The gray pony knocked him into the sea, and he was washed out where there is a great surf on the white rocks.

[MAURYA has gone over and knelt down at the head of the table. The WOMEN are keening softly and swaying themselves with a slow movement. CATHLEEN and NORA kneel at the other end of the table. The MEN kneel near the door.]

Maurya. *[Raising her head and speaking as if she did not see the people around her.]* They're all gone now, and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me. . . . I'll have no call now to be up crying and praying when the wind breaks from the south, and you can hear the surf is in the east, and the surf is in the west, making a great stir with the two noises, and they hitting one on the other. I'll have no call now to be going down and getting Holy Water in the dark nights after Samhain, and I won't care what way the sea is when the other women will be keening. *[To NORA.]* Give me the Holy Water, Nora, there's a small sup still on the dresser. *[NORA gives it to her.]*

Maurya. *[Drops MICHAEL's clothes across BARTLEY's feet, and sprinkles the Holy Water over him.]* It isn't that I haven't prayed for you, Bartley, to the Almighty God. It isn't that I haven't said prayers in the dark night till you wouldn't know what I'd be saying; but it's a great rest I'll have

now, and it's time surely. It's a great rest I'll have now, and great sleeping in the long nights after Samhain, if it's only a bit of wet flour we do have to eat, and maybe a fish that would be stinking.

[She kneels down again, crossing herself, and saying prayers under her breath.]

Cathleen. *[To an OLD MAN.]* Maybe yourself and Eamon would make a coffin when the sun rises. We have fine white boards herself bought, God help her, thinking Michael would be found, and I have a new cake you can eat while you'll be working.

The Old Man. *[Looking at the boards.]* Are there nails with them?

Cathleen. There are not, Colum; we didn't think of the nails.

Another Man. It's a great wonder she wouldn't think of the nails, and all the coffins she's seen made already.

Cathleen. It's getting old she is, and broken.

[MAURYA stands up again very slowly and spreads out the pieces of MICHAEL's clothes beside the body, sprinkling them with the last of the Holy Water.]

Nora. *[In a whisper to CATHLEEN.]* She's quiet now, and easy; but the day Michael was drowned you could hear her crying out from this to the spring well. It's fonder she was of Michael, and would any one have thought that?

Cathleen. *[Slowly and clearly.]* An old woman will be soon tired with anything she will do, and isn't it nine days herself is after crying and keening, and making great sorrow in the house?

Maurya. *[Puts the empty cup mouth downwards on the table, and lays her hands together on BARTLEY's feet.]* They're all together this time, and the end is come. May the Almighty God have mercy on Bartley's soul, and on Michael's soul, and on the souls of Sheamus and Patch, and Stephen and Shawn. *[Bending her head.]* And may He have mercy on my soul, Nora, and on the soul of every one is left living in the world.

[She pauses, and the keening rises a little more loudly from the WOMEN, then sinks away.]

Maurya. *[Continuing.]* Michael has a clean burial in the far north, by the grace of the Almighty God. Bartley will have a fine coffin out of the white boards, and a deep grave surely. What more can we want than that? No man at all can be living forever, and we must be satisfied.

[She kneels down again and the CURTAIN falls slowly.]

“HENRY IV” *

[*Enrico Quarto*]

By

LUIGI PIRANDELLO

Translated by EDWARD STORER

PIRANDELLO SAID:

“There are authors who write for the pleasure they take in writing alone and who look for no other satisfaction. Such writers might be described as historical. But there are others who, in addition to deriving the pleasure I have described, feel a spiritual need that will not permit them to use characters, events, or scenes which are not impregnated, so to speak, with a special sense of life that gives them a universal significance or value. Such writers are, properly speaking, philosophical. And to this latter group I have the misfortune to belong.”

Pirandello stands, therefore, among the intellectual dramatists, such as Ibsen, Shaw, Granville-Barker, and a few others, whose purpose is frankly and finally to make their audiences think. For this purpose they will arouse laughter or tears, but they do not consider laughter or tears the end of drama. Rather it is the stimulation of the intellect through the dramatic conflict of opinions and habits of thought. But whereas Ibsen and Shaw and the other philosophical dramatists were concerned with the problems of conduct confronting the individual in society, Pirandello was concerned with a problem he thought deeper and more puzzling, namely, what *is* the individual?

He said:

“When a man lives, he lives and does not see himself. Well, put a mirror before him and make him see himself in the act of living, under the sway of his passions: either he remains astonished and dumbfounded at his own appearance, or else he turns away his eyes so as not to see himself, or else in disgust he spits at his image, or again he clenches his fist to break it; and if he had been weeping, he can weep no more; if he

had been laughing, he can laugh no more, and so on. In a word, there arises a crisis, and that crisis is my theater.”

And he makes the Father in *Six Characters* state the aspect of the problem of personality which he used in so many of his plays, including “*Henry IV*”:

“With different persons, we may be a quite different individual. We cling, however, to the illusion that we remain identical for all persons and every situation. Nothing could be more false than this illusion, as we realize when suddenly surprised in the midst of some particular action. We know that we are not wholly committed and expressed in this action, and that it would be a cruel injustice if a man were judged solely upon the strength of it, pinned down perpetually to this particular moment as if the whole of his life were thereby summarized and made manifest.”

Pirandello saw that, though personality is fluid and dynamic, we live as though it were solid and static. Out of that conflict arise the plays. In “*Henry IV*” a personality is artificially made solid and static, and he is mad; when he becomes sane again, the lapse of time prevents his resuming life, since life and time have flowed past him; during the play he attempts action, only to be fixed forever in the attitude of madness.

In order to show a man “under the sway of his passions,” Pirandello chose ordinarily a plot whose events are violent and sensational. But he rarely showed these events on stage; he preferred to employ the retrospective technique whereby they are gradually revealed to the audience as explanation of the peculiarities of the characters. The formula—and Pirandello used the same plan so often it may be called a formula—has this obvious defect, that we say to ourselves, “These things could never happen to us.”

But it was probably not Pirandello’s inten-

* From *Three Plays* by Luigi Pirandello. Reprinted by permission of E. P. Dutton & Co.

tion to tell us they could; he wished to tell us rather that we cannot certainly know human beings; that the individual is and must remain eternally a puzzle. Perhaps that is why Pirandello called every volume of his collected plays *Maschere Nude—Naked Masks*.

Pirandello was late in turning to the drama, writing his first play when he was forty-six years old. But before then he had published numerous short stories, six volumes of poetry, and four novels, besides some critical works. In the novels his interest in the analysis of personality can be clearly perceived, while in the short stories he showed his flair for the dramatic, which he himself took account of by turning many of them into plays. Until he turned to drama he was not given much critical attention, but it came to him rapidly thereafter. With *Six Characters* in 1921 his reputation became world-wide.

"*Henry IV*" was produced in New York in 1924 as *The Living Mask*. In 1925 the play was offered in London under the original

title, and revived in 1929 as *The Mock Emperor*.

HISTORICAL NOTE

Henry IV (1050-1106), King of Italy, Germany, and Burgundy, and later Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, refused to obey a decree of Gregory VII (Hildebrand), pope 1073-1085, forbidding lay investiture, that is, the appointment by lay princes of bishops and other church officers. Henry was excommunicated by Gregory in January 1076, and in January 1077 made his famous submission at Canossa. He is reported to have stood for three days and two nights in the snow of the castle courtyard, unarmed and unattended, dressed in penitent's sackcloth, awaiting the pope's willingness to receive him. He seems to have made his submission in order to strengthen his cause against the rebellious Saxon nobles, who had nominated an anti-king. In this he succeeded, but he had given dramatic evidence of the power of the pope's weapon of excommunication.

LUIGI PIRANDELLO

Born 1867, Girgenti, Sicily.

Ph.D., University of Bonn, Germany.

1899-1923, Teacher of Italian Literature in Normal College for Women in Rome.

1925, Formed his own Art Theatre in Rome.

1934, Awarded Nobel Prize for literature.

Novelist, short story writer, and poet.

Died 1936.

PLAYS

1913 *La Morsa* (one act, translated as *The Vise*). 1913 *Lumie di Sicilia* (one act, translated as *Sicilian Limes*). The following three plays cannot be accurately dated, except that they are later than *La Morsa: Il Dovere del Medico* (one act, translated as *The Doctor's Duty*). *Cecè* (one act, translated as *Chee-Chee*). *L'Imbecille* (one act, translated as *The Imbecile*). 1915 *Se non Così* (first form of *La Ragione degli Altri*). 1916 *Liola* (translated). 1916 *Pensaci, Giacomino!* (translated as *Think It Over, Jimmy*). 1916 *Così È (se vi pare)* (translated as *Right You Are!* (*If You Think So*), and as *And That's the Truth!*). 1916 *All' Uscita* (one act, translated as *At the Gate*). 1917 *Il Berretto a Sonagli*. 1917 *Il Piacere dell' Onestà* (translated as *The Pleasure of Honesty*). 1917

L'Innesto. 1918 *Il Giuoco delle Parti* (translated as *The Game as He Played It*, and as *Playing the Game*). 1918 *Ma non è una Cosa Seria* (translated as *He Didn't Mean It*). 1919 *L'Uomo, La Bestia e la Virtù* (translated as *Man, Beast, and Virtue*, and as *Say It with Flowers*). 1920 *Tutto per Bene*. 1920 *Come Prima Meglio di Prima* (adapted as *Floriani's Wife*). 1920 *La Signora Morli Una e Due* (revised, 1926, with the title *Due in Una*). 1920 *La Patente* (one act, translated as *By Judgment of Court*, and as *Legal Title*). 1921 *La Ragione degli Altri* (second form of *Se non Così*). 1921 *Sei Personaggi in cerca d'Autore* (translated as *Six Characters in Search of an Author*). 1922 *Enrico Quarto* (translated as "*Henry IV*"). 1922 *Vestire gli Ignudi* (translated as *Naked*). 1923 *La Vita che ti Diedi* (translated as *The Life I Gave to Thee*, and as *The Mother*).

1923 *L'Uomo dal Fiore in Bocca* (one act, translated as *The Man with the Flower in His Mouth*). 1924 *Ciascuno a Suo Modo* (translated as *Each in His Own Way*). 1925 *L'Altro Figlio* (one act, translated as *The House with the Column*). 1925 *La Giara* (one act, translated as *The Jar*). 1925 *La Sagra del Signor della Nave* (one act, translated as *Our Lord of the Ship*). 1926 *Diana e la Tuda*. 1927 *L'Amica delle Mogli*. 1928 *La Nuova Colonia* (translated as *The New Colony*). 1929 *O di Uno o di Nessuno*. 1929 *Lazzaro* (translated as *Lazarus*, and as *Though One Rose*). 1930 *Come Tu Mi Vuoi*

(translated as *As You Desire Me*). 1930 *Questa Sera si recita a Soggetto* (translated as *Tonight We Improvise*). 1932 *Trovarsi*. 1933 *Quando se è Qualcuno*. 1934 *La Favola del Figlio Combiato* (libretto for music of Malipiero). 1935 *Non Si Sa Come*. 1947 *I Giganti della Montagna* (unfinished).

WRITINGS ON DRAMA

"Comment et pourquoi j'ai écrit Six personnages en quête d'auteur," *Revue de Paris*, IV, 332 (July 15, 1925).

"HENRY IV"

Characters

"HENRY IV."

THE MARCHIONESS MATILDA SPINA.

HER DAUGHTER FRIDA.

THE YOUNG MARQUIS CHARLES DI NOLLI.

BARON TITO BELCREDI.

DOCTOR DIONYSIUS GENONI.

THE FOUR PRIVATE COUNSELLORS:

HAROLD (FRANK).

LANDOLPH (LOLO).

ORDULPH (MOMO).

BERTHOLD (FINO).

JOHN, THE OLD WAITER.

THE TWO VALETS IN COSTUME.

A Solitary Villa in Italy in Our Own Time.

ACT I

Salon in the villa, furnished and decorated so as to look exactly like the throne room of Henry IV in the royal residence at Goslar. Among the antique decorations there are two modern life-size portraits in oil painting. They are placed against the back wall, and mounted in a wooden stand that runs the whole length of the wall. (It is wide and protrudes, so that it is like a large bench.) One of the paintings is on the right; the other on the left of the throne, which is in the middle of the wall and divides the stand.

The Imperial chair and baldachin.

The two portraits represent a lady and a gentleman, both young, dressed up in carnival costumes: one as "Henry IV" the other as the "Marchioness Matilda of Tuscany." Exits to right and left, two on each side.

[When the curtain goes up, the two VALETS jump down, as if surprised, from the stand on which they have been lying, and go and take their positions, as rigid as statues, on either side below the Throne with their halberds in their hands. Soon after, from the second exit, right, enter HAROLD, LANDOLPH, ORDULPH and BERTHOLD, young men employed by the MARQUIS CHARLES DI NOLLI to play the part of "Secret Counsellors" at the court of "HENRY IV." They are, therefore, dressed like German knights of the XIth century. BERTHOLD, nick-named FINO, is just entering on his duties for the first time. His companions are telling him what he has to do and

amusing themselves at his expense. The scene is to be played rapidly and vivaciously.]

Landolph. [To BERTHOLD as if explaining.] And this is the throne room.

Harold. At Goslar.

Ordulph. Or at the castle in the Hartz, if you prefer.

Harold. Or at Wurms.

Landolph. According as to what's doing, it jumps about with us, now here, now there.

Ordulph. In Saxony.

Harold. In Lombardy.

Landolph. On the Rhine.

One of the VALETS. [Without moving, just opening his lips.] I say . . .

Harold. [Turning round.] What is it?

First Valet. [Like a statue.] Is he coming in or not? [He alludes to HENRY IV.]

Ordulph. No, no, he's asleep. You needn't worry.

Second Valet. [Releasing his pose, taking a long breath and going to lie down again on the stand.] You might have told us at once.

First Valet. [Going over to HAROLD.] Have you got a match, please?

Landolph. What? You can't smoke a pipe here, you know.

First Valet. [While HAROLD offers him a light.] No; a cigarette.

[Lights his cigarette and lies down again on the stand.]

Berthold. [Who has been looking on in amazement, walking round the room, regarding the costumes of the others.] I say . . . this room . . . these costumes . . . Which

Henry IV is it? I don't quite get it. Is he Henry IV of France or not?

[At this LANDOLPH, HAROLD, and ORDULPH burst out laughing.]

LANDOLPH. [Still laughing; and pointing to BERTHOLD as if inviting the others to make fun of him.] Henry of France he says: ha! ha!

ORDULPH. He thought it was the king of France!

HAROLD. Henry IV of Germany, my boy: the Salian dynasty!

ORDULPH. The great and tragic Emperor!

LANDOLPH. He of Canossa. Every day we carry on here the terrible war between Church and State, by Jove.

ORDULPH. The Empire against the Papacy!

HAROLD. Antipopes against the Pope!

LANDOLPH. Kings against antikings!

ORDULPH. War on the Saxons!

HAROLD. And all the rebel Princes!

LANDOLPH. Against the Emperor's own sons!

BERTHOLD. [Covering his head with his hands to protect himself against this avalanche of information.] I understand! I understand! Naturally, I didn't get the idea at first. I'm right then: these aren't costumes of the XVth century?

HAROLD. XVth century! Not much!

ORDULPH. We're somewhere between a thousand and eleven hundred.

LANDOLPH. Work it out for yourself: if we are before Canossa on the 25th of January, 1077 . . .

BERTHOLD. [More confused than ever.] Oh my God! What a mess I've made of it!

ORDULPH. Well, just slightly, if you supposed you were at the French court.

BERTHOLD. All that historical stuff I've crammed!

LANDOLPH. My dear boy, it's four hundred years earlier.

BERTHOLD. [Getting angry.] Good Heavens! You ought to have told me it was Germany and not France. I can't tell you how many books I've read in the last fifteen days.

HAROLD. But I say, surely you knew that poor Tito was Adalbert of Bremen,¹ here?

BERTHOLD. Not a damned bit!

LANDOLPH. Well, don't you see how it is? When Tito died, the Marquis Di Nolli . . .

BERTHOLD. Oh, it was he, was it? He might have told me.

HAROLD. Perhaps he thought you knew.

LANDOLPH. He didn't want to engage anyone else in substitution. He thought the remaining three of us would do. But he began to cry out: "With Adalbert driven away . . .": because, you see, he didn't imagine poor Tito was dead; but that, as Bishop Adalbert, the rival bishops of Cologne and Mayence had driven him off . . .

BERTHOLD. [Taking his head in his hand.] But I don't know a word of what you're talking about.

ORDULPH. So much the worse for you, my boy!

HAROLD. But the trouble is that not even we know who you are.

BERTHOLD. What? Not even you? You don't know who I'm supposed to be?

ORDULPH. Hum! "Berthold."

BERTHOLD. But which Berthold? And why Berthold?

LANDOLPH. [Solemnly imitating HENRY IV.] "They've driven Adalbert away from me. Well then, I want Berthold! I want Berthold!" That's what he said.

HAROLD. We three looked one another in the eyes: who's got to be Berthold?

ORDULPH. And so here you are, "Berthold," my dear fellow!

LANDOLPH. I'm afraid you will make a bit of a mess of it.

BERTHOLD. [Indignant, getting ready to go.] Ah, no! Thanks very much, but I'm off! I'm out of this!

HAROLD. [Restraining him with the other two, amid laughter.] Steady now! Don't get excited!

LANDOLPH. Cheer up, my dear fellow! We don't any of us know who we are really. He's Harold; he's Ordulph; I'm Landolph! That's the way he calls us. We've got used to it. But who are we? Names of the period! Yours, too, is a name of the period: Berthold! Only one of us, poor Tito, has got a really decent part, as you can read in history: that of the Bishop of Bremen. He was just like a real bishop. Tito did it awfully well, poor chap!

HAROLD. Look at the study he put into it!

LANDOLPH. Why, he even ordered his Majesty about, opposed his views, guided and counselled him. We're "secret counsellors" — in a manner of speaking only; because it is written in history that Henry IV was hated by the upper aristocracy for surrounding himself at court with young men of the bourgeoisie.

ORDULPH. Us, that is.

LANDOLPH. Yes, small devoted vassals, a bit dissolute and very gay . . .

BERTHOLD. So I've got to be gay as well?

¹ Adalbert, Archbishop of Bremen, was Henry IV's patronus or tutor; he was driven from court in 1066 by the jealousy of other bishops; he returned in 1069 and died in 1072.

Harold. I should say so! Same as we are!

Ordulph. And it isn't too easy, you know.

Landolph. It's a pity; because the way we're got up, we could do a fine historical reconstruction. There's any amount of material in the story of Henry IV. But, as a matter of fact, we do nothing. We have the form without the content. We're worse than the real secret counsellors of Henry IV; because certainly no one had given them a part to play—at any rate, they didn't feel they had a part to play. It was their life. They looked after their own interests at the expense of others, sold investitures and—what not! We stop here in this magnificent court—for what?—Just doing nothing. We're like so many puppets hung on the wall, waiting for some one to come and move us or make us talk.

Harold. Ah no, old sport, not quite that! We've got to give the proper answer, you know. There's trouble if he asks you something and you don't chip in with the cue.

Landolph. Yes, that's true.

Berthold. Don't rub it in too hard! How the devil am I to give him the proper answer, if I've crammed Henry IV of France, and now he turns out to be Henry IV of Germany? [*The other three laugh.*]

Harold. You'd better start and prepare yourself at once.

Ordulph. We'll help you out.

Harold. We've got any amount of books on the subject. A brief run through the main points will do to begin with.

Ordulph. At any rate, you must have got some sort of general idea.

Harold. Look here! [*Turns him around and shows him the portrait of the MARCHIONESS MATILDA on the wall.*] Who's that?

Berthold. [*Looking at it.*] That? Well, the thing seems to me somewhat out of place, anyway: two modern paintings in the midst of all this respectable antiquity!

Harold. You're right! They weren't there in the beginning. There are two niches there behind the pictures. They were going to put up two statues in the style of the period. Then the places were covered with those canvases there.

Landolph. [*Interrupting and continuing.*] They would certainly be out of place if they really were paintings!

Berthold. What are they, if they aren't paintings?

Landolph. Go and touch them! Pictures all right . . . but for him! [*Makes a mysterious gesture to the right, alluding to HENRY IV.*] . . . who never touches them! . . .

Berthold. No? What are they for him?

Landolph. Well, I'm only supposing, you know; but I imagine I'm about right. They're images such as . . . well—such as a mirror might throw back. Do you understand? That one there represents himself, as he is in this throne room, which is all in the style of the period. What's there to marvel at? If we put you before a mirror, won't you see yourself, alive, but dressed up in ancient costume? Well, it's as if there were two mirrors there, which cast back living images in the midst of a world which, as you will see, when you have lived with us, comes to life too.

Berthold. I say, look here . . . I've no particular desire to go mad here.

Harold. Go mad, be hanged! You'll have a fine time!

Berthold. Tell me this: how have you all managed to become so learned?

Landolph. My dear fellow, you can't go back over 800 years of history without picking up a bit of experience.

Harold. Come on! come on! You'll see how quickly you get into it!

Ordulph. You'll learn wisdom, too, at this school.

Berthold. Well, for Heaven's sake, help me a bit! Give me the main lines, anyway.

Harold. Leave it to us. We'll do it all between us.

Landolph. We'll put your wires on you and fix you up like a first class marionette. Come along!

[*They take him by the arm to lead him away.*]

Berthold. [*Stopping and looking at the portrait on the wall.*] Wait a minute! You haven't told me who that is. The Emperor's wife?

Harold. No! The Emperor's wife is Bertha of Susa, the sister of Amadeus II of Savoy.

Ordulph. And the Emperor, who wants to be young with us, can't stand her, and wants to put her away.

Landolph. That is his most ferocious enemy: Matilda, Marchioness of Tuscany.¹

Berthold. Ah, I've got it: the one who gave hospitality to the Pope!

Landolph. Exactly: at Canossa!

Ordulph. Pope Gregory VII!

Harold. Our *bête noir*! Come on! come on!

[*All four move toward the right to go out, when, from the left, the old servant JOHN enters in evening dress.*]

¹ Lived 1046–1115. Always a vigorous supporter of the papacy. Her estates, which included Canossa, were the richest in Italy.

John. [Quickly, anxiously.] Hss! Hss! Frank! Lolo!

Harold. [Turning round.] What is it?

Berthold. [Marvelling at seeing a man in modern clothes enter the throne room.] Oh! I say, this is a bit too much, this chap here!

Landolph. A man of the XXth century, here! Oh, go away!

[They run over to him, pretending to menace him and throw him out.]

Ordulph. [Heroically.] Messenger of Gregory VII, away!

Harold. Away! Away!

John. [Annoyed, defending himself.] Oh, stop it! Stop it, I tell you!

Ordulph. No, you can't set foot here!

Harold. Out with him!

Landolph. [To BERTHOLD.] Magic, you know! He's a demon conjured up by the Wizard of Rome! Out with your swords!

[Makes as if to draw a sword.]

John. [Shouting.] Stop it, will you? Don't play the fool with me! The Marquis has arrived with some friends. . . .

Landolph. Good! Good! Are there ladies too?

Ordulph. Old or young?

John. There are two gentlemen.

Harold. But the ladies, the ladies, who are they?

John. The Marchioness and her daughter.

Landolph. [Surprised.] What do you say?

Ordulph. The Marchioness?

John. The Marchioness! The Marchioness!

Harold. Who are the gentlemen?

John. I don't know.

Harold. [To BERTHOLD.] They're coming to bring us a message from the Pope, do you see?

Ordulph. All messengers of Gregory VII! What fun!

John. Will you let me speak, or not?

Harold. Go on, then!

John. One of the two gentlemen is a doctor, I fancy.

Landolph. Oh, I see, one of the usual doctors.

Harold. Bravo, Berthold, you'll bring us luck!

Landolph. You wait and see how we'll manage this doctor!

Berthold. It looks as if I were going to get into a nice mess right away.

John. If the gentlemen would allow me to speak . . . they want to come here into the throne room.

Landolph. [Surprised.] What? She? The Marchioness here?

Harold. Then this is something quite different! No play-acting this time!

Landolph. We'll have a real tragedy: that's what!

Berthold. [Curious.] Why? Why?

Ordulph. [Pointing to the portrait.] She is that person there, don't you understand?

Landolph. The daughter is the fiancée of the Marquis. But what have they come for, I should like to know?

Ordulph. If he sees her, there'll be trouble.

Landolph. Perhaps he won't recognize her any more.

John. You must keep him there, if he should wake up. . . .

Ordulph. Easier said than done, by Jove!

Harold. You know what he's like!

John. Even by force, if necessary! Those are my orders. Go on! Go on!

Harold. Yes, because who knows if he hasn't already waked up?

Ordulph. Come on then!

Landolph. [Going toward JOHN with the others.] You'll tell us later what it all means.

[Exit the FOUR COUNSELLORS.]

John. [Shouting after them.] Close the door there, and hide the key! That other door too.

[Pointing to the other door on right.]

John. [To the two VALETS.] Be off, you two! There! [Pointing to exit right.] Close the door after you, and hide the key!

[The two VALETS go out by the first door on right. JOHN moves over to the left to show in: DONNA MATILDA SPINA, the young MARCHIONESS FRIDA, DR. DIONYSIUS GENONI, the BARON TITO BELCREDI and the young MARQUIS CHARLES DI NOLLI, who, as master of the house, enters last.]

DONNA MATILDA SPINA is about 45, still handsome, although there are too patent signs of her attempts to remedy the ravages of time with make-up. Her head is thus rather like a Walkyrie's. This facial make-up contrasts with her beautiful sad mouth. A widow for many years, she now has as her friend the BARON TITO BELCREDI, whom neither she nor anyone else takes seriously—at least so it would appear.

What TITO BELCREDI really is for her at bottom, he alone knows; and he is, therefore, entitled to laugh, if his friend feels the need of pretending not to know. He can always laugh at the jests which the beautiful MARCHIONESS makes with the others at his expense.

He is slim, prematurely gray, and younger than she is. His head is bird-like in shape. He would be a very vivacious person, if his ductile agility (which among other things makes him a redoubtable swordsman) were not enclosed in a sheath of Arab-like laziness, which is revealed in his strange, nasal drawn-out voice.

FRIDA, the daughter of the MARCHIONESS, is 19. She is sad, because her imperious and too beautiful mother puts her in the shade, and provokes facile gossip against her daughter as well as against herself. Fortunately for her, she is engaged to the MARQUIS CHARLES DI NOLLI.

CHARLES DI NOLLI is a stiff young man, very indulgent toward others, but sure of himself for what he amounts to in the world. He is worried about all the responsibilities which he believes weigh on him. He is dressed in deep mourning for the recent death of his mother.

DR. DIONYSIUS GENONI has a bold, rubicund, Satyr-like face, prominent eyes, a pointed beard (which is silvery and shiny), and elegant manners. He is nearly bald. All enter in a state of perturbation, almost as if afraid, and all (except DI NOLLI) looking curiously about the room. At first, they speak sotto voce.]

Di Nolli. [To JOHN.] Have you given the orders properly?

John. Yes, my Lord; don't be anxious about that.

Belcredi. Ah, magnificent! magnificent!

Doctor. How extremely interesting! Even in the surroundings his raving madness—has been perfectly taken into account!

Donna Matilda. [Glancing round for her portrait, discovers it, and goes up close to it.]

Ah! Here it is! [Going back to admire it, while mixed emotions stir within her.] Yes . . . yes . . . [Calls her daughter FRIDA.]

Frida. Ah, your portrait!

Donna Matilda. No, no . . . look again; it's you, not I, there!

Di Nolli. Yes, it's quite true. I told you so, I . . .

Donna Matilda. But I would never have believed it! [Shaking as if with a chill.] What a strange feeling it gives one! [Then looking at her DAUGHTER.] Frida, what's the matter? [She pulls her to her side, and slips an arm round her waist.] Come; don't you see yourself in me there?

Frida. Well, I really . . .

Donna Matilda. Don't you think so? Don't you, really? [Turning to BELCREDI.] Look at it, Tito! Speak up, man!

Belcredi. [Without looking.] Ah, no! I shan't look at it. For me, a priori, certainly not!

Donna Matilda. Stupid! You think you are paying me a compliment! [Turning to DOCTOR GENONI.] What do you say, Doctor? Do say something, please!

[DOCTOR makes a movement to go near to the picture.]

Belcredi. [With his back turned, pretending to attract his attention secretly.] Hss! No, Doctor! For the love of Heaven, have nothing to do with it!

Doctor. [Getting bewildered and smiling.] And why shouldn't I?

Donna Matilda. Don't listen to him! Come here! He's insufferable!

Frida. He acts the fool by profession, didn't you know that?

Belcredi. [To the DOCTOR, seeing him go over.] Look to your feet, Doctor! Mind where you're going!

Doctor. Why?

Belcredi. Be careful you don't put your foot in it!

Doctor. [Laughing feebly.] No, no. After all, it seems to me there's no reason to be astonished at the fact that a daughter should resemble her mother!

Belcredi. Hullo! Hullo! He's done it now; he's said it.

Donna Matilda. [With exaggerated anger, advancing toward BELCREDI.] What's the matter? What has he said? What has he done?

Doctor. [Candidly.] Well, isn't it so?

Belcredi. [Answering the MARCHIONESS.] I said there was nothing to be astounded at—and you are astounded! And why so, then, if the thing is so simple and natural for you now?

Donna Matilda. [Still more angry.] Fool! fool! It's just because it is so natural! Just because it isn't my daughter who is there. [Pointing to the canvas.] That is my portrait; and to find my daughter there instead of me fills me with astonishment, an astonishment which, I beg you to believe, is sincere. I forbid you to cast doubts on it.

Frida. [Slowly and wearily.] My God! It's always like this . . . rows over nothing. . . .

Belcredi. [Also slowly, looking dejected, in accents of apology.] I cast no doubt on anything! I noticed from the beginning that you haven't shared your mother's astonish-

ment; or, if something did astonish you, it was because the likeness between you and the portrait seemed so strong.

Donna Matilda. Naturally! She cannot recognize herself in me as I was at her age; while I, there, can very well recognize myself in her as she is now!

Doctor. Quite right! Because a portrait is always there fixed in the twinkling of an eye: for the young lady something far away and without memories, while, for the Marchioness, it can bring back everything: movements, gestures, looks, smiles, a whole heap of things. . . .

Donna Matilda. Exactly!

Doctor. [*Continuing, turning toward her.*] Naturally enough, you can live all these old sensations again in your daughter.

Donna Matilda. He always spoils every innocent pleasure for me, every touch I have of spontaneous sentiment! He does it merely to annoy me.

Doctor. [*Frightened at the disturbance he has caused, adopts a professorial tone.*] Likeness, dear Baron, is often the result of imponderable things. So one explains that . . .

Belcredi. [*Interrupting the discourse.*] Somebody will soon be finding a likeness between you and me, my dear professor!

Di Nolli. Oh! let's finish with this, please! [*Points to the two doors on the right, as a warning that there is someone there who may be listening.*] We've wasted too much time as it is!

Frida. As one might expect when he's present.

[*Alludes to BELCREDI.*]

Di Nolli. Enough! The Doctor is here; and we have come for a very serious purpose which you all know is important for me.

Doctor. Yes, that is so! But now, first of all, let's try to get some points down exactly. Excuse me, Marchioness, will you tell me why your portrait is here? Did you present it to him then?

Donna Matilda. No, not at all. How could I have given it to him? I was just like Frida then—and not even engaged. I gave it to him three or four years after the accident. I gave it to him because his mother wished it so much. . . .

[*Points to DI NOLLI.*]

Doctor. She was his sister?

[*Alludes to HENRY IV.*]

Di Nolli. Yes, Doctor; and our coming here is a debt we pay to my mother, who has been dead for more than a month. Instead of being here, she and I [*Indicating FRIDA.*] ought to be traveling together. . . .

Doctor. . . . Taking a cure of quite a different kind!

Di Nolli. H'm! Mother died in the firm conviction that her adored brother was just about to be cured.

Doctor. And can't you tell me, if you please, how she inferred this?

Di Nolli. The conviction would appear to have derived from certain strange remarks which he made, a little before mother died.

Doctor. Oh, remarks! . . . Ah! . . . It would be extremely useful for me to have those remarks, word for word, if possible.

Di Nolli. I can't remember them. I know that mother returned awfully upset from her last visit with him. On her death-bed, she made me promise that I would never neglect him, that I would have doctors see him, and examine him.

Doctor. Um! Um! Let me see! let me see! Sometimes very small reasons determine . . . and this portrait here then? . . .

Donna Matilda. For Heaven's sake, Doctor, don't attach excessive importance to this. It made an impression on me because I had not seen it for so many years!

Doctor. If you please, quietly, quietly . . .

Di Nolli. Well, yes, it must be about fifteen years ago.

Donna Matilda. More, more: eighteen!

Doctor. Forgive me, but you don't quite know what I'm trying to get at. I attach a very great importance to these two portraits. . . . They were painted, naturally, prior to the famous—and most regrettable pageant, weren't they?

Donna Matilda. Of course!

Doctor. That is . . . when he was quite in his right mind—that's what I've been trying to say. Was it his suggestion that they should be painted?

Donna Matilda. Lots of the people who took part in the pageant had theirs done as a souvenir . . .

Belcredi. I had mine done—as "Charles of Anjou!"

Donna Matilda. . . . as soon as the costumes were ready.

Belcredi. As a matter of fact, it was proposed that the whole lot of us should be hung together in a gallery of the villa where the pageant took place. But in the end, everybody wanted to keep his own portrait.

Donna Matilda. And I gave him this portrait of me without very much regret . . . since his mother . . .

[*Indicates DI NOLLI.*]

Doctor. You don't remember if it was he who asked for it?

Donna Matilda. Ah, that I don't remem-

ber . . . Maybe it was his sister, wanting to help out . . .

Doctor. One other thing: was it his idea, this pageant?

Belcredi. [At once.] No, no, it was mine!

Doctor. If you please . . .

Donna Matilda. Don't listen to him! It was poor Belassi's idea.

Belcredi. Belassi! What had he got to do with it?

Donna Matilda. Count Belassi, who died, poor fellow, two or three months after . . .

Belcredi. But if Belassi wasn't there when . . .

Di Nolli. Excuse me, Doctor; but is it really necessary to establish whose the original idea was?

Doctor. It would help me, certainly!

Belcredi. I tell you the idea was mine! There's nothing to be proud of in it, seeing what the result's been. Look here, Doctor, it was like this. One evening, in the first days of November, I was looking at an illustrated German review in the club. I was merely glancing at the pictures, because I can't read German. There was a picture of the Kaiser, at some university town where he had been a student . . . I don't remember which.

Doctor. Bonn, Bonn!

Belcredi. You are right! Bonn! He was on horseback, dressed up in one of those ancient German student guild-costumes, followed by a procession of noble students, also in costume. The picture gave me the idea. Already some one at the club had spoken of a pageant for the forthcoming carnival. So I had the notion that each of us should choose for this Tower of Babel pageant to represent some character: a king, an emperor, a prince, with his queen, empress, or lady, alongside of him—and all on horseback. The suggestion was at once accepted.

Donna Matilda. I had my invitation from Belassi.

Belcredi. Well, he wasn't speaking the truth! That's all I can say, if he told you the idea was his. He wasn't even at the club the evening I made the suggestion, just as he [Meaning HENRY IV.] wasn't there either.

Doctor. So he chose the character of Henry IV?

Donna Matilda. Because I . . . thinking of my name, and not giving the choice any importance, said I would be the Marchioness Matilda of Tuscany.

Doctor. I . . . don't understand the relation between the two.

Donna Matilda. Neither did I, to begin with, when he said that in that case he would

be at my feet like Henry IV of Canossa. I had heard of Canossa of course; but to tell the truth, I'd forgotten most of the story; and I remember I received a curious impression when I had to get up my part, and found that I was the faithful and zealous friend of Pope Gregory VII in deadly enmity with the Emperor of Germany. Then I understood why, since I had chosen to represent his implacable enemy, he wanted to be near me in the pageant as Henry IV.

Doctor. Ah, perhaps because . . .

Belcredi. Good Heavens, Doctor, because he was then paying furious court to her! [Indicates the MARCHIONESS.] And she, naturally . . .

Donna Matilda. Naturally? Not naturally at all . . .

Belcredi. [Pointing to her.] She couldn't stand him . . .

Donna Matilda. No, that isn't true! I didn't dislike him. Not at all! But for me, when a man begins to want to be taken seriously, well . . .

Belcredi. [Continuing for her.] He gives you the clearest proof of his stupidity.

Donna Matilda. No, dear; not in this case; because he was never a fool like you.

Belcredi. Anyway, I've never asked you to take me seriously.

Donna Matilda. Yes, I know. But with him one couldn't joke. [Changing her tone and speaking to the Doctor.] One of the many misfortunes which happen to us women, Doctor, is to see before us every now and again a pair of eyes glaring at us with a contained intense promise of eternal devotion. [Bursts out laughing.] There is nothing quite so funny. If men could only see themselves with that eternal fidelity look in their faces! I've always thought it comic; then more even than now. But I want to make a confession—I can do so after twenty years or more. When I laughed at him then, it was partly out of fear. One might have almost believed a promise from those eyes of his. But it would have been very dangerous.

Doctor. [With lively interest.] Ah! ah! This is most interesting! Very dangerous, you say?

Donna Matilda. Yes, because he was very different from the others. And then, I am . . . well . . . what shall I say? . . . a little impatient of all that is pondered, or tedious. But I was too young then, and a woman. I had the bit between my teeth. It would have required more courage than I felt I possessed. So, I laughed at him too—with remorse, to spite myself, indeed; since I saw that my own laugh mingled with those

of all the others—the other fools—who made fun of him.

Belcredi. My own case, more or less!

Donna Matilda. You make people laugh at you, my dear, with your trick of always humiliating yourself. It was quite a different affair with him. There's a vast difference. And you—you know—people laugh in your face!

Belcredi. Well, that's better than behind one's back!

Doctor. Let's get to the facts. He was then already somewhat exalted, if I understand rightly.

Belcredi. Yes, but in a curious fashion, Doctor.

Doctor. How?

Belcredi. Well, cold-bloodedly, so to speak.

Donna Matilda. Not at all! It was like this, Doctor! He was a bit strange, certainly; but only because he was fond of life: eccentric, there!

Belcredi. I don't say he simulated exaltation. On the contrary, he was often genuinely exalted. But I could swear, Doctor, that he saw himself at once in his own exaltation. Moreover, I'm certain it made him suffer. Sometimes he had the most comical fits of rage against himself.

Doctor. Yes?

Donna Matilda. That is true.

Belcredi. [To DONNA MATILDA.] And why? [To the DOCTOR.] Evidently, because that immediate lucidity that comes from acting, assuming a part, at once put him out of key with his own feelings, which seemed to him not exactly false, but like something he was obliged to valorize there and then as—what shall I say?—as an act of intelligence, to make up for that sincere cordial warmth he felt lacking. So he improvised, exaggerated, let himself go, so as to distract and forget himself. He appeared inconstant, fatuous, and—yes—even ridiculous, sometimes.

Doctor. And may we say unsociable?

Belcredi. No, not at all. He was famous for getting up things: *tableaux vivants*, dances, theatrical performances for charity: all for the fun of the thing, of course. He was a jolly good actor, you know!

Di Nolli. Madness has made a superb actor of him.

Belcredi. Why, so he was even in the old days. When the accident happened, after the horse fell . . .

Doctor. Hit the back of his head, didn't he?

Donna Matilda. Oh, it was horrible! He

was beside me! I saw him between the horse's hoofs! It was rearing!

Belcredi. None of us thought it was anything serious at first. There was a stop in the pageant, a bit of disorder. People wanted to know what had happened. But they'd already taken him off to the villa.

Donna Matilda. There wasn't the least sign of a wound, not a drop of blood.

Belcredi. We thought he had merely fainted.

Donna Matilda. But two hours afterwards . . .

Belcredi. He reappeared in the drawing-room of the villa . . . that is what I wanted to say . . .

Donna Matilda. My God! What a face he had! I saw the whole thing at once!

Belcredi. No, no! that isn't true. Nobody saw it, Doctor, believe me!

Donna Matilda. Doubtless, because you were all like mad folk.

Belcredi. Everybody was pretending to act his part for a joke. It was a regular Babel.

Donna Matilda. And you can imagine, Doctor, what terror struck into us when we understood that he, on the contrary, was playing his part in deadly earnest . . .

Doctor. Oh, he was there too, was he?

Belcredi. Of course! He came straight into the midst of us. We thought he'd quite recovered, and was pretending, fooling, like all the rest of us . . . only doing it rather better; because, as I say, he knew how to act.

Donna Matilda. Some of them began to hit him with their whips and fans and sticks.

Belcredi. And then—as a king, he was armed, of course—he drew out his sword and menaced two or three of us . . . It was a terrible moment, I can assure you!

Donna Matilda. I shall never forget that scene—all our masked faces hideous and terrified gazing at him, at that terrible mask of his face, which was no longer a mask, but madness, madness personified.

Belcredi. He was Henry IV, Henry IV in person, in a moment of fury.

Donna Matilda. He'd got into it all the detail and minute preparation of a month's careful study. And it all burned and blazed there in the terrible obsession which lit his face.

Doctor. Yes, that is quite natural, of course. The momentary obsession of a dilettante became fixed, owing to the fall and the damage to the brain.

Belcredi. [To FRIDA and DI NOLLI.] You see the kind of jokes life can play on us.

[To DI NOLLI.] You were four or five years old. [To FRIDA.] Your mother imagines you've taken her place there in that portrait; when, at the time, she had not the remotest idea that she would bring you into the world. My hair is already gray; and he—look at him— [Points to the portrait.] ha! A smack on the head, and he never moves again: Henry IV for ever!

Doctor. [Seeking to draw the attention of the others, looking learned and imposing.] Well, well, then it comes, we may say, to this . . .

[Suddenly the first exit to right, the one nearest footlights, opens, and BERTHOLD enters all excited.]

Berthold. [Rushing in.] I say! I say!

[Stops for a moment, arrested by the astonishment which his appearance has caused in the others.]

Frida. [Running away terrified.] Oh dear! oh dear! it's he, it's . . .

Donna Matilda. [Covering her face with her hands so as not to see.] Is it, is it he?

Di Nolli. No, no, what are you talking about? Be calm!

Doctor. Who is it then?

Belcredi. One of our masqueraders.

Di Nolli. He is one of the four youths we keep here to help him out in his madness . . .

Berthold. I beg your pardon, Marquis . . .

Di Nolli. Pardon be damned! I gave orders that the doors were to be closed, and that nobody should be allowed to enter.

Berthold. Yes, sir, but I can't stand it any longer, and I ask you to let me go away this very minute.

Di Nolli. Oh, you're the new valet, are you? You were supposed to begin this morning, weren't you?

Berthold. Yes, sir, and I can't stand it, I can't bear it.

Donna Matilda. [To DI NOLLI excitedly.] What? Then he's not so calm as you said?

Berthold. [Quickly.] No, no, my lady, it isn't he; it's my companions. You say, "help him out with his madness," Marquis; but they don't do anything of the kind. They're the real madmen. I come here for the first time, and instead of helping me . . .

[LANDOLPH and HAROLD come in from the same door, but hesitate on the threshold.]

Landolph. Excuse me.

Harold. May I come in, my Lord?

Di Nolli. Come in! What's the matter? What are you all doing?

Frida. Oh God! I'm frightened! I'm going to run away.

[Makes toward exit at left.]

Di Nolli. [Restraining her at once.] No, no, Frida!

Landolph. My Lord, this fool here . . . [Indicates BERTHOLD.]

Berthold. [Protesting.] Ah, no thanks, my friends, no thanks! I'm not stopping here! I'm off!

Landolph. What do you mean—you're not stopping here?

Harold. He's ruined everything, my Lord, running away in here!

Landolph. He's made him quite mad. We can't keep him in there any longer. He's given orders that he's to be arrested; and he wants to "judge" him at once from the throne. What is to be done?

Di Nolli. Shut the door, man! Shut the door! Go and close that door!

[LANDOLPH goes over to close it.]

Harold. Ordulph, alone, won't be able to keep him there.

Landolph. My Lord, perhaps if we could announce the visitors at once, it would turn his thoughts. Have the gentlemen thought under what pretext they will present themselves to him?

Di Nolli. It's all been arranged! [To the Doctor.] If you, Doctor, think it well to see him at once. . . .

Frida. I'm not coming! I'm not coming! I'll keep out of this. You too, mother, for Heaven's sake, come away with me!

Doctor. I say . . . I suppose he's not armed, is he?

Di Nolli. Nonsense! Of course not. [To FRIDA.] Frida, you know this is childish of you. You wanted to come!

Frida. I didn't at all. It was mother's idea.

Donna Matilda. And I'm quite ready to see him. What are we going to do?

Belcredi. Must we absolutely dress up in some fashion or other?

Landolph. Absolutely essential, indispensable, sir. Alas! as you see . . . [Shows his costume.] there'd be awful trouble if he saw you gentlemen in modern dress.

Harold. He would think it was some diabolical masquerade.

Di Nolli. As these men seem to be in costume to you, so we appear to be in costume to him, in these modern clothes of ours.

Landolph. It wouldn't matter so much if he wouldn't suppose it to be the work of his mortal enemy.

Belcredi. Pope Gregory VII?

Landolph. Precisely. He calls him "a pagan."

Belcredi. The Pope a pagan? Not bad that!

Landolph. Yes, sir—and a man who calls up the dead! He accuses him of all the diabolical arts. He's terribly afraid of him.

Doctor. Persecution mania!

Harold. He'd be simply furious.

Di Nolli. [*To BELCREDI.*] But there's no need for you to be there, you know. It's sufficient for the doctor to see him.

Doctor. What do you mean? . . . I? Alone?

Di Nolli. But they are there.

[*Indicates the three YOUNG MEN.*]

Doctor. I don't mean that . . . I mean if the Marchioness . . .

Donna Matilda. Of course. I mean to see him too, naturally. I want to see him again.

Frida. Oh, why, mother, why? Do come away with me, I implore you!

Donna Matilda. [*Imperiously.*] Let me do as I wish! I came here for this purpose! [*To LANDOLPH.*] I shall be "Adelaide," the mother.

Landolph. Excellent! The mother of the Empress Bertha. Good! It will be enough if her Ladyship wears the ducal crown and puts on a mantle that will hide her other clothes entirely. [*To HAROLD.*] Off you go, Harold!

Harold. Wait a moment! And this gentleman here? [*Alludes to the DOCTOR.*]

Doctor. Ah yes . . . we decided I was to be . . . the Bishop of Cluny, Hugh of Cluny!

Harold. The gentleman means the Abbot. Very good! Hugh of Cluny.

Landolph. He's often been here before!

Doctor. [*Amazed.*] What? Been here before?

Landolph. Don't be alarmed! I mean that it's an easily prepared disguise . . .

Harold. We've made use of it on other occasions, you see!

Doctor. But . . .

Landolph. Oh no, there's no risk of his remembering. He pays more attention to the dress than to the person.

Donna Matilda. That's fortunate for me, too.

Di Nolli. Frida, you and I'll get along. Come on, Tito!

Belcredi. Ah no. If she [*Indicates the MARCHIONESS.*] stops here, so do I!

Donna Matilda. But I don't need you at all.

Belcredi. You may not need me, but I

should like to see him again myself. Mayn't I?

Landolph. Well, perhaps it would be better if there were three.

Harold. How is the gentleman to be dressed then?

Belcredi. Oh, try and find some easy costume for me.

Landolph. [*To HAROLD.*] Hum! Yes . . . he'd better be from Cluny too.

Belcredi. What do you mean—from Cluny?

Landolph. A Benedictine's habit of the Abbey of Cluny. He can be in attendance on Monsignor. [*To HAROLD.*] Off you go! [*To BERTHOLD.*] And you too get away and keep out of sight all today. No, wait a bit! [*To BERTHOLD.*] You bring here the costumes he will give you. [*To HAROLD.*] You go at once and announce the visit of the "Duchess Adelaide" and "Monsignor Hugh of Cluny." Do you understand?

[*HAROLD and BERTHOLD go off by the first door on the right.*]

Di Nolli. We'll retire now.

[*Goes off with FRIDA, left.*]

Doctor. Shall I be a *persona grata* to him, as Hugh of Cluny?

Landolph. Oh, rather! Don't worry about that! Monsignor has always been received here with great respect. You too, my Lady, he will be glad to see. He never forgets that it was owing to the intercession of you two that he was admitted to the Castle of Cannossa and the presence of Gregory VII, who didn't want to receive him.

Belcredi. And what do I do?

Landolph. You stand a little apart respectfully: that's all.

Donna Matilda. [*Irritated, nervous.*] You would do well to go away, you know.

Belcredi. [*Slowly, spitefully.*] How upset you seem! . . .

Donna Matilda. [*Proudly.*] I am as I am. Leave me alone!

[*BERTHOLD comes in with the costumes.*]

Landolph. [*Seeing him enter.*] Ah, the costumes: here they are. This mantle is for the Marchioness . . .

Donna Matilda. Wait a minute! I'll take off my hat.

[*Does so and gives it to BERTHOLD.*]

Landolph. Put it down there! [*Then to the MARCHIONESS, while he offers to put the ducal crown on her head.*] Allow me!

Donna Matilda. Dear, dear! Isn't there a mirror here?

Landolph. Yes, there's one there. [*Points*

to the door on the left.] If the Marchioness would rather put it on herself . . .

Donna Matilda. Yes, yes, that will be better. Give it to me!

[*Takes up her hat and goes off with BERTHOLD, who carries the cloak and the crown.*]

Belcredi. Well, I must say, I never thought I should be a Benedictine monk! By the way, this business must cost an awful lot of money.

The Doctor. Like any other fantasy, naturally!

Belcredi. Well, there's a fortune to go upon.

Landolph. We have got there a whole wardrobe of costumes of the period, copied to perfection from old models. This is my special job. I get them from the best theatrical costumers. They cost lots of money.

[*DONNA MATILDA reenters, wearing mantle and crown.*]

Belcredi. [At once, in admiration.] Oh, magnificent! Oh, truly regal!

Donna Matilda. [Looking at BELCREDI and bursting out into laughter.] Oh no, no! Take it off! You're impossible. You look like an ostrich dressed up as a monk.

Belcredi. Well, how about the doctor?

The Doctor. I don't think I look so bad, do I?

Donna Matilda. No; the doctor's all right . . . but you are too funny for words.

The Doctor. Do you have many receptions here then?

Landolph. It depends. He often gives orders that such and such a person appear before him. Then we have to find someone who will take the part. Women too . . .

Donna Matilda. [Hurt, but trying to hide the fact.] Ah, women too?

Landolph. Oh, yes; many at first.

Belcredi. [Laughing.] Oh, that's great! In costume, like the Marchioness?

Landolph. Oh well, you know, women of the kind that lend themselves to . . .

Belcredi. Ah, I see! [Perfidiously to the MARCHIONESS.] Look out, you know he's becoming dangerous for you.

[*The second door on the right opens, and HAROLD appears, making first of all a discreet sign that all conversation should cease.*]

Harold. His Majesty, the Emperor!

[*The two VALETS enter first, and go and stand on either side of the throne. Then HENRY IV comes in between ORDULPH and HAROLD, who keep a little in the rear respectfully.*]

[HENRY IV is about 50 and very pale. The hair on the back of his head is already gray; over the temples and forehead it appears blond, owing to its having been tinted in an evident and puerile fashion. On his cheek bones he has two small, doll-like dabs of color that stand out prominently against the rest of his tragic pallor. He is wearing a penitent's sack over his regal habit, as at Canossa. His eyes have a fixed look which is dreadful to see, and this expression is in strained contrast with the sackcloth. ORDULPH carries the imperial crown; HAROLD, the sceptre with the eagle, and the globe with the cross.]

Henry IV. [Bowing first to DONNA MATILDA and afterwards to the DOCTOR.] My lady . . . Monsignor . . . [Then he looks at BELCREDI and seems about to greet him too; when, suddenly, he turns to LANDOLPH, who has approached him, and asks him sotto voce and with diffidence.] Is that Peter Damiani?¹

Landolph. No, Sire. He is a monk from Cluny who is accompanying the Abbot.

Henry IV. [Looks again at BELCREDI with increasing mistrust, and then noticing that he appears embarrassed and keeps glancing at DONNA MATILDA and the DOCTOR, stands upright and cries out.] No, it's Peter Damiani! It's no use, Father, your looking at the Duchess. [Then turning quickly to DONNA MATILDA and the DOCTOR as though to ward off a danger.] I swear it! I swear it that my heart is changed toward your daughter. I confess that if he [Indicates BELCREDI.] hadn't come to forbid it in the name of Pope Alexander, I'd have repudiated her. Yes, yes, there were people ready to favor the repudiation: the bishop of Mayence would have done it for a matter of one hundred and twenty farms. [Looks at LANDOLPH a little perplexed and adds.] But I mustn't speak ill of the bishops at this moment! [More humbly to BELCREDI.] I am grateful to you, believe me, I am grateful to you for the hindrance you put in my way!—God knows, my life's been all made of humiliations: my mother, Adalbert, Tribur, Goslar!² And now this sackcloth you see me wearing! [Changes tone suddenly and speaks like one who goes over his part in a parenthesis of astuteness.] It doesn't matter: clarity of ideas, perspicacity, firmness, and

¹ Cardinal Pietro Damiani had persuaded Henry IV in 1069 not to divorce his wife Bertha.

² Henry was separated from his mother and Adalbert against his will; at Tribur and Goslar he was forced to yield to rebellious Saxon nobles.

patience under adversity—that's the thing. [*Then turning to all and speaking solemnly.*] I know how to make amends for the mistakes I have made; and I can humiliate myself even before you, Peter Damiani. [*Bows profoundly to him and remains curved. Then a suspicion is born in him which he is obliged to utter in menacing tones, almost against his will.*] Was it not perhaps you who started that obscene rumor that my holy mother had illicit relations with the Bishop of Augusta?

Belcredi. [*Since HENRY IV has his finger pointed at him.*] No, no, it wasn't I . . .

Henry IV. [*Straightening up.*] Not true, not true? Infamy! [*Looks at him and then adds.*] I didn't think you capable of it! [*Goes to the DOCTOR and plucks his sleeve, while winking at him knowingly.*] Always the same, Monsignor, those bishops, always the same!

Harold. [*Softly, whispering as if to help out the DOCTOR.*] Yes, yes, the rapacious bishops!

The Doctor. [*To HAROLD, trying to keep it up.*] Ah, yes, those fellows . . . ah yes . . .

Henry IV. Nothing satisfies them! I was a little boy, Monsignor . . . One passes the time, playing even, when, without knowing it, one is a king.—I was six years old; and they tore me away from my mother, and made use of me against her without my knowing anything about it¹ . . . always profaning, always stealing, stealing! . . . One greedier than the other . . . Hanno worse than Stephen!² Stephen worse than Hanno!

Landolph. [*Sotto voce, persuasively, to call his attention.*] Majesty!

Henry IV. [*Turning round quickly.*] Ah yes . . . this isn't the moment to speak ill of the bishops. But this infamy against my mother, Monsignor, is too much. [*Looks at the MARCHIONESS and grows tender.*] And I can't even weep for her, Lady . . . I appeal to you who have a mother's heart! She came here to see me from her convent a month ago . . . They had told me she was dead! [*Sustained pause full of feeling. Then smiling sadly.*] I can't weep for her; because if you are here now, and I am like this [*Shows the sackcloth he is wearing.*], it means I am twenty-six years old!

Harold. And that she is therefore alive, Majesty! . . .

Ordulph. Still in her convent!

Henry IV. [*Looking at them.*] Ah yes! And I can postpone my grief to another time. [*Shows the MARCHIONESS almost with coquetry the tint he has given to his hair.*] Look! I am still fair . . . [*Then slowly as if in confidence.*] For you . . . there's no need! But little exterior details do help! A matter of time, Monsignor, do you understand me? [*Turns to the MARCHIONESS and notices her hair.*] Ah, but I see that you too, Duchess . . . Italian, eh? [*As much as to say "false"; but without any indignation, indeed rather with malicious admiration.*] Heaven forbid that I should show disgust or surprise! Nobody cares to recognize that obscure and fatal power which sets limits to our will. But I say, if one is born and one dies . . . Did you want to be born, Monsignor? I didn't! And in both cases, independently of our wills, so many things happen we would wish didn't happen, and to which we resign ourselves as best we can! . . .

Doctor. [*Merely to make a remark, while studying HENRY IV carefully.*] Alas! Yes, alas!

Henry IV. It's like this: When we are not resigned, out come our desires. A woman wants to be a man . . . an old man would be young again. Desires, ridiculous fixed ideas of course—But reflect! Monsignor, those other desires are not less ridiculous: I mean, those desires where the will is kept within the limits of the possible. Not one of us can lie or pretend. We're all fixed in good faith in a certain concept of ourselves. However, Monsignor, while you keep yourself in order, holding on with both your hands to your holy habit, there slips down from your sleeves, there peels off from you like . . . like a serpent . . . something you don't notice: life, Monsignor! [*Turns to the MARCHIONESS.*] Has it never happened to you, my Lady, to find a different self in yourself? Have you always been the same? My God! One day . . . how was it, how was it you were able to commit this or that action? [*Fixes her so intently in the eyes as almost to make her blanch.*] Yes, that particular action. That very one: we understand each other! But don't be afraid: I shall reveal it to none. And you, Peter Damiani, how could you be a friend of that man? . . .

Landolph. Majesty!

Henry IV. [*At once.*] No, I won't name him! [*Turning to BELCREDI.*] What did you think of him? But we all of us cling tight to our conceptions of ourselves, just as he

¹ In 1062, when Henry was 12, not 6, Archbishop Hanno of Cologne engineered a successful conspiracy to take the young king away from his mother, the empress-regent Agnes.

² Stephen IX, pope 1057–1058, who opposed Henry's election as King of Germany, Italy, and Burgundy.

who is growing old dyes his hair. What does it matter that this dyed hair of mine isn't a reality for you, if it *is*, to some extent, for me?—you, you, my Lady, certainly don't dye your hair to deceive the others, nor even yourself; but only to cheat your own image a little before the looking-glass. I do it for a joke! You do it seriously! But I assure you that you too, Madam, are in masquerade, though it be in all seriousness; and I am not speaking of the venerable crown on your brows or the ducal mantle. I am speaking only of the memory you wish to fix in yourself of your fair complexion one day when it pleased you—or of your dark complexion, if you were dark: the fading image of your youth! For you, Peter Damiani, on the contrary, the memory of what you have been, of what you have done, seems to you a recognition of past realities that remain within you like a dream. I'm in the same case too: with so many inexplicable memories—like dreams! Ah! . . . There's nothing to marvel at in it, Peter Damiani! Tomorrow it will be the same thing with our life of today! [*Suddenly getting excited and taking hold of his sackcloth.*] This sackcloth here! . . . [*Beginning to take it off with a gesture of almost ferocious joy while the three VALETS run over to him, frightened, as if to prevent his doing so.*] Ah, my God! [*Draws back and throws off sackcloth.*] Tomorrow, at Bressanone, twenty-seven German and Lombard bishops will sign with me the act of deposition of Gregory VII! No Pope at all! Just a false monk!¹

Ordulph. [*With the other three.*] Majesty! Majesty! In God's name! . . .

Harold. [*Inviting him to put on the sackcloth again.*] Listen to what he says, Majesty!

Landolph. Monsignor is here with the Duchess to intercede in your favor.

[*Makes secret signs to the DOCTOR to say something at once.*]

Doctor. [*Foolishly.*] Ah yes . . . yes . . . we are here to intercede . . .

Henry IV. [*Repenting at once, almost terrified, allowing the three to put on the sackcloth again, and pulling it down over him with his own hands.*] Pardon . . . yes . . . yes . . . pardon, Monsignor: forgive me, my Lady . . . I swear to you I feel the whole weight of the anathema. [*Bends himself, takes his face between his hands, as though waiting for something to crush him. Then changing tone, but without moving, says softly to LANDOLPH, HAROLD, and OR-*

DULPH.] But I don't know why I cannot be humble before that man there!

[*Indicates BELCREDI.*]

Landolph. [*Sotto voce.*] But why, Majesty, do you insist on believing he is Peter Damiani, when he isn't, at all?

Henry IV. [*Looking at him timorously.*] He isn't Peter Damiani?

Harold. No, no, he is a poor monk, Majesty.

Henry IV. [*Sadly with a touch of exasperation.*] Ah! None of us can estimate what we do when we do it from instinct . . . You, perhaps, Madam, can understand me better than the others, since you are a woman and a Duchess. This is a solemn and decisive moment. I could, you know, accept the assistance of the Lombard bishops, arrest the Pope, lock him up here in the castle, run to Rome, and elect an anti-Pope; offer alliance to Robert Guiscard¹—and Gregory VII would be lost! I resist the temptation; and, believe me, I am wise in doing so. I feel the atmosphere of our times and the majesty of one who knows how to be what he ought to be! a Pope! Do you feel inclined to laugh at me, seeing me like this? You would be foolish to do so; for you don't understand the political wisdom which makes this penitent's sack advisable. The parts may be changed tomorrow. What would you do then? Would you laugh to see the Pope a prisoner? No! It would come to the same thing: I dressed as a penitent today; he, as prisoner tomorrow! But woe to him who doesn't know how to wear his mask, be he king or Pope!—Perhaps he is a bit too cruel! No! Yes, yes, maybe!—You remember, my Lady, how your daughter Bertha, for whom, I repeat, my feelings have changed [*Turns to BELCREDI and shouts to his face as if he were being contradicted by him.*]—yes, changed on account of the affection and devotion she showed me in that terrible moment . . . [*Then once again to the MARCHIONESS.*] you remember how she came with me, my Lady, followed me like a beggar, and passed two nights out in the open, in the snow? You are her mother! Doesn't this touch your mother's heart? Doesn't this urge you to pity, so that you will beg His Holiness for pardon, beg him to receive us?

Donna Matilda. [*Trembling, with feeble voice.*] Yes, yes, at once . . .

Doctor. It shall be done!

Henry IV. And one thing more! [*Draws them in to listen to him.*] It isn't enough

¹ These words were used by Henry in a letter to Gregory VII before the excommunication.

¹ Duke of Apulia, in control of southern Italy.

that he should receive me! You know he can do *everything—everything*, I tell you! He can even call up the dead. [*Touches his chest.*] Behold me! Do you see me? There is no magic art unknown to him. Well, Mon-signor, my Lady, my torment is really this: that whether here or there [*Pointing to his portrait almost in fear.*] I can't free myself from this magic. I am a penitent now, you see; and I swear to you I shall remain so until he receives me. But you two, when the excommunication is taken off, must ask the Pope to do this thing he can so easily do: to take me away from that [*Indicating the portrait again.*]; and let me live wholly

and freely my miserable life. A man can't always be twenty-six, my Lady. I ask this of you for your daughter's sake too; that I may love her as she deserves to be loved, well disposed as I am now, all tender toward her for her pity. There: it's all there! I am in your hands! [*Bows.*] My Lady! Mon-signor!

[*He goes off, bowing grandly, through the door by which he entered, leaving every one stupefied, and the MARCHIONESS so profoundly touched, that no sooner has he gone than she breaks out into sobs and sits down almost fainting.*]

CURTAIN

ACT II

Another room of the villa, adjoining the throne room. Its furniture is antique and severe. Principal exit at rear in the background. To the left, two windows looking on the garden. To the right, a door opening into the throne room.

Late afternoon of the same day.

[DONNA MATILDA, the DOCTOR, and BELCREDI are on the stage engaged in conversation; but DONNA MATILDA stands on one side, evidently annoyed at what the other two are saying, although she cannot help listening, because, in her agitated state, everything interests her in spite of herself. The talk of the other two attracts her attention, because she instinctively feels the need for calm at the moment.]

Belcredi. It may be as you say, Doctor, but that was my impression.

Doctor. I won't contradict you; but, believe me, it is only . . . an impression.

Belcredi. Pardon me, but he even said so, and quite clearly. [*Turning to the MARCHIONESS.*] Didn't he, Marchioness?

Donna Matilda. [*Turning round.*] What did he say? . . . [*Then not agreeing.*] Oh yes . . . but not for the reason you think!

Doctor. He was alluding to the costumes we had slipped on . . . Your cloak [*Indicating the MARCHIONESS.*], our Benedictine habits . . . But all this is childish!

Donna Matilda. [*Turning, quickly, indignant.*] Childish? What do you mean, Doctor?

Doctor. From one point of view, it is—I beg you to let me say so, Marchioness! Yet, on the other hand, it is much more complicated than you can imagine.

Donna Matilda. To me, on the contrary, it is perfectly clear!

Doctor. [*With the condescending smile of the competent person toward those who do not understand.*] We must take into account the peculiar psychology of madmen; which, you must know, enables us to be certain that they observe things and can, for instance, easily detect people who are disguised; can in fact recognize the disguise and yet believe in it; just as children do, for whom disguise is both play and reality. That is why I used the word childish. But the thing is extremely complicated, inasmuch as he must be perfectly aware of being an image to himself and for himself—that image there, in fact!

[*Alluding to the portrait in the throne room, and pointing to the right.*]

Belcredi. That's what he said!

Doctor. Very well then—An image before which other images, ours, have appeared: understand? Now he, in his acute and perfectly lucid delirium, was able to detect at once a difference between his image and ours: that is, he saw that ours were make-believes. So he suspected us; because all madmen are armed with a special diffidence. But that's all there is to it! Our make-believe, built up all round his, did not seem pitiful to him. While his seemed all the more tragic to us, in that he, as if in defiance—understand?—and induced by his suspi-

cion, wanted to show us up merely as a joke. That was also partly the case with him, in coming before us with painted cheeks and hair, and saying he had done it on purpose for a jest.

Donna Matilda. [*Impatiently.*] No, it's not that, Doctor. It's not like that! It's not like that!

Doctor. Why isn't it, may I ask?

Donna Matilda. [*With decision but trembling.*] I am perfectly certain he recognized me!

Doctor. It's not possible . . . it's not possible!

Belcredi. [*At the same time.*] Of course not!

Donna Matilda. [*More than ever determined, almost convulsively.*] I tell you, he recognized me! When he came close up to speak to me—looking in my eyes, right into my eyes—he recognized me!

Belcredi. But he was talking of your daughter!

Donna Matilda. That's not true! He was talking of me! Of me!

Belcredi. Yes, perhaps, when he said . . .

Donna Matilda. [*Letting herself go.*] About my dyed hair! But didn't you notice that he added at once: "or the memory of your dark hair, if you were dark"? He remembered perfectly well that I was dark—then!

Belcredi. Nonsense! nonsense!

Donna Matilda. [*No! listening to him, turning to the DOCTOR.*] My hair, Doctor, is really dark—like my daughter's! That's why he spoke of me.

Belcredi. But he doesn't even know your daughter! He's never seen her!

Donna Matilda. Exactly! Oh, you never understand anything! By my daughter, stupid, he meant me—as I was then!

Belcredi. Oh, this is catching! This is catching, this madness!

Donna Matilda. [*Softly, with contempt.*] Fool!

Belcredi. Excuse me, were you ever his wife? Your daughter is his wife—in his delirium: Bertha of Susa.

Donna Matilda. Exactly! Because I, no longer dark—as he remembered me—but fair, introduced myself as "Adelaide," the mother. My daughter doesn't exist for him: he's never seen her—you said so yourself! So how can he know whether she's fair or dark?

Belcredi. But he said dark, speaking generally, just as anyone who wants to recall, whether fair or dark, a memory of youth in

the color of the hair! And you, as usual, begin to imagine things! Doctor, you said I ought not to have come! It's she who ought not to have come!

Donna Matilda. [*Upset for a moment by BELCREDI's remark, recovers herself. Then with a touch of anger, because doubtful.*] No, no . . . he spoke of me . . . He spoke all the time to me, with me, of me . . .

Belcredi. That's not bad! He didn't leave me a moment's breathing space; and you say he was talking all the time to you? Unless you think he was alluding to you too, when he was talking to Peter Damiani!

Donna Matilda. [*Defiantly, almost exceeding the limits of courteous discussion.*] Who knows? Can you tell me why, from the outset, he showed a strong dislike for you, for you alone?

[*From the tone of the question, the expected answer must almost explicitly be: "Because he understands you are my lover." BELCREDI feels this so well that he remains silent and can say nothing.*]

Doctor. The reason may also be found in the fact that only the visit of the Duchess Adelaide and the Abbot of Cluny was announced to him. Finding a third person present, who had not been announced, at once his suspicion . . .

Belcredi. Yes, exactly! His suspicion made him see an enemy in me: Peter Damiani! But she's got it into her head that he recognized her . . .

Donna Matilda. There's no doubt about it! I could see it from his eyes, Doctor. You know, there's a way of looking that leaves no doubt whatever . . . Perhaps it was only for an instant, but I am sure!

Doctor. It is not impossible: a lucid moment . . .

Donna Matilda. Yes, perhaps . . . And then his speech seemed to me full of regret for his and my youth—for the horrible thing that happened to him, that has held him in that disguise from which he has never been able to free himself, and from which he longs to be free—he said so himself!

Belcredi. Yes, so as to be able to make love to your daughter, or you, as you believe—having been touched by your pity.

Donna Matilda. Which is very great, I would ask you to believe.

Belcredi. As one can see, Marchioness; so much so that a miracle-worker might expect a miracle from it!

Doctor. Will you let me speak? I don't work miracles, because I am a doctor and

not a miracle-worker. I listened very intently to all he said; and I repeat that that certain analogical elasticity, common to all symptomatised delirium, is evidently with him much . . . what shall I say?—much relaxed! The elements, that is, of his delirium no longer hold together. It seems to me he has lost the equilibrium of his second personality and sudden recollections drag him—and this is very comforting—not from a state of incipient apathy, but rather from a morbid inclination to reflective melancholy, which shows a . . . a very considerable cerebral activity. Very comforting, I repeat! Now if, by this violent trick we've planned . . .

Donna Matilda. [Turning to the window, in the tone of a sick person complaining.] But how is it that the motor has not returned? It's three hours and a half since . . .

Doctor. What do you say?

Donna Matilda. The motor, Doctor! It's more than three hours and a half . . .

Doctor. [Taking out his watch and looking at it.] Yes, more than four hours, by this!

Donna Matilda. It could have reached here an hour ago at least! But, as usual . . .

Belcredi. Perhaps they can't find the dress . . .

Donna Matilda. But I explained exactly where it was! [Impatiently.] And Frida . . . where is Frida?

Belcredi. [Looking out of the window.] Perhaps she is in the garden with Charles . . .

Doctor. He'll talk her out of her fright.

Belcredi. She's not afraid, Doctor; don't you believe it: the thing bores her rather . . .

Donna Matilda. Just don't ask anything of her! I know what she's like.

Doctor. Let's wait patiently. Anyhow, it will soon be over, and it has to be in the evening . . . It will only be the matter of a moment! If we can succeed in rousing him, as I was saying, and in breaking at one go the threads—already slack—which still bind him to this fiction of his, giving him back what he himself asks for—you remember, he said: "One cannot always be twenty-six years old, madam!"—if we can give him freedom from this torment, which even he feels is a torment, then if he is able to recover at one bound the sensation of the distance of time . . .

Belcredi. [Quickly.] He'll be cured! [Then emphatically with irony.] We'll pull him out of it all!

Doctor. Yes, we may hope to set him going again, like a watch which has stopped at a certain hour . . . just as if we had our

watches in our hands and were waiting for that other watch to go again. A shake—so—and let's hope it'll tell the time again after its long stop.

[At this point the MARQUIS CHARLES DI NOLLI enters from the principal entrance.]

Donna Matilda. Oh, Charles! . . . And Frida? Where is she?

Di Nolli. She'll be here in a moment.

Doctor. Has the motor arrived?

Di Nolli. Yes.

Donna Matilda. Yes? Has the dress come?

Di Nolli. It's been here some time.

Doctor. Good! Good!

Donna Matilda. [Trembling.] Where is she? Where's Frida?

Di Nolli. [Shrugging his shoulders and smiling sadly, like one lending himself unwillingly to an untimely joke.] You'll see, you'll see! . . . [Pointing toward the hall.] Here she is! . . .

[BERTHOLD appears at the threshold of the hall, and announces with solemnity.]

Berthold. Her Highness the Countess Matilda of Canossa!

[FRIDA enters, magnificent and beautiful, arrayed in the robes of her mother as "Countess Matilda of Tuscany," so that she is a living copy of the portrait in the throne room.]

Frida. [Passing BERTHOLD, who is bowing, says to him with disdain.] Of Tuscany, of Tuscany! Canossa is just one of my castles!

Belcredi. [In admiration.] Look! Look! She seems another person. . . .

Donna Matilda. One would say it were I! Look!—Why, Frida, look! She's exactly my portrait, alive!

Doctor. Yes, yes . . . Perfect! Perfect! The portrait, to the life.

Belcredi. Yes, there's no question about it. She is the portrait! Magnificent!

Frida. Don't make me laugh, or I shall burst! I say, mother, what a tiny waist you had! I had to squeeze so to get into this!

Donna Matilda. [Arranging her dress a little.] Wait! . . . Keep still! . . . These pleats . . . is it really so tight?

Frida. I'm suffocating! I implore you to be quick!

Doctor. But we must wait till it's evening!

Frida. No, no, I can't hold out till evening!

Donna Matilda. Why did you put it on so soon?

Frida. The moment I saw it, the temptation was irresistible. . . .

Donna Matilda. At least you could have called me, or have had someone help you! It's still all crumpled.

Frida. So I saw, mother; but they are old creases; they won't come out.

Doctor. It doesn't matter, Marchioness! The illusion is perfect. [*Then coming near and asking her to come in front of her DAUGHTER, without hiding her.*] If you please, stay there, there . . . at a certain distance . . . now a little more forward . . .

Belcredi. For the feeling of the distance of time . . .

Donna Matilda. [*Slightly turning to him.*] Twenty years after! A disaster! A tragedy!

Belcredi. Now don't let's exaggerate!

Doctor. [*Embarrassed, trying to save the situation.*] No, no! I meant the dress . . . so as to see . . . You know . . .

Belcredi. [*Laughing.*] Oh, as for the dress, Doctor, it isn't a matter of twenty years! It's eight hundred! An abyss! Do you really want to shove him across it [*Pointing first to FRIDA and then to the MARCHIONESS.*] from there to here? But you'll have to pick him up in pieces with a basket! Just think now: for us it is a matter of twenty years, a couple of dresses, and a masquerade. But if, as you say, Doctor, time has stopped for and around him: if he lives there [*Pointing to FRIDA.*] with her, eight hundred years ago . . . I repeat: the giddiness of the jump will be such that finding himself suddenly among us . . . [*The Doctor shakes his head in dissent.*] You don't think so?

Doctor. No, because life, my dear baron, can take up its rhythms. This—our life—will at once become real also to him; and will pull him up directly, wresting from him suddenly the illusion, and showing him that the eight hundred years, as you say, are only twenty! It will be like one of those tricks, such as the leap into space, for instance, of the Masonic rite, which appears to be heaven knows how far, and is only a step down the stairs.

Belcredi. Ah! An idea! Yes! Look at Frida and the Marchioness, Doctor! Which is more advanced in time? We old people, Doctor? The young ones think they are more ahead; but it isn't true: we are more ahead, because time belongs to us more than to them.

Doctor. If the past didn't alienate us . . .

Belcredi. It doesn't matter at all! How does it alienate us? They [*Pointing to FRIDA and DI NOLLI.*] have still to do what we

have accomplished, Doctor: to grow old, doing the same foolish things, more or less, as we did . . . This is the illusion: that one comes forward through a door to life. It isn't so! As soon as one is born, one starts dying; therefore, he who started first is the most advanced of all. The youngest of us is father Adam! Look there: [*Pointing to FRIDA.*] eight hundred years younger than all of us—the Countess Matilda of Tuscany.

[*He makes her a deep bow.*]

Di Nolli. I say, Tito, don't start joking.

Belcredi. Oh, you think I am joking? . . .

Di Nolli. Of course, of course . . . all the time.

Belcredi. Impossible! I've even dressed up as a Benedictine . . .

Di Nolli. Yes, but for a serious purpose.

Belcredi. Well, exactly. If it had been serious for the others . . . for Frida, now, for instance. [*Then turning to the DOCTOR.*] I swear, Doctor, I don't understand what you want to do.

Doctor. [*Annoyed.*] You'll see! Let me do as I wish. . . . At present you see the Marchioness still dressed as . . .

Belcredi. Oh, she also . . . has to masquerade?

Doctor. Of course! of course! In another dress that's in there ready to be used when it comes into his head he sees the Countess Matilda of Canossa before him.

Frida. [*While talking quietly to DI NOLLI notices the DOCTOR's mistake.*] Of Tuscany, of Tuscany!

Doctor. It's all the same!

Belcredi. Oh, I see! He'll be faced by two of them . . .

Doctor. Two, precisely! And then . . .

Frida. [*Calling him aside.*] Come here, Doctor! Listen!

Doctor. Here I am.

[*Goes near the TWO YOUNG PEOPLE and pretends to give some explanations to them.*]

Belcredi. [*Softly to DONNA MATILDA.*] I say, this is getting rather strong, you know!

Donna Matilda. [*Looking him firmly in the face.*] What?

Belcredi. Does it really interest you as much as all that—to make you willing to take part in . . . ? For a woman, this is simply enormous! . . .

Donna Matilda. Yes, for an ordinary woman.

Belcredi. Oh, no, my dear, for all women—in a question like this! It's an abnegation.

Donna Matilda. I owe it to him.

Belcredi. Don't lie! You know well enough it's not hurting you!

Donna Matilda. Well then, where does the abnegation come in?

Belcredi. Just enough to prevent you losing caste in other people's eyes—and just enough to offend me! . . .

Donna Matilda. But who is worrying about you now?

Di Nolli. [*Coming forward.*] It's all right. It's all right. That's what we'll do! [*Turning toward BERTHOLD.*] Here you, go and call one of those fellows!

Berthold. At once! [*Exit.*]

Donna Matilda. But first of all we've got to pretend that we are going away.

Di Nolli. Exactly! I'll see to that . . . [*To BELCREDI.*] You don't mind staying here?

Belcredi. [*Ironically.*] Oh, no, I don't mind, I don't mind! . . .

Di Nolli. We must look out not to make him suspicious again, you know.

Belcredi. Oh, Lord! *He* doesn't amount to anything!

Doctor. He must believe absolutely that we've gone away.

[*LANDOLPH followed by BERTHOLD enters from the right.*]

Landolph. May I come in?

Di Nolli. Come in! Come in! I say—your name's Lolo, isn't it?

Landolph. Lolo, or Landolph, just as you like!

Di Nolli. Well, look here: the Doctor and the Marchioness are leaving, at once.

Landolph. Very well. All we've got to say is that they have been able to obtain the permission for the reception from His Holiness. He's in there in his own apartments repenting of all he said—and in an awful state to have the pardon! Would you mind coming a minute? . . . If you would, just for a minute . . . put on the dress again . . .

Doctor. Why, of course, with pleasure . . .

Landolph. Might I be allowed to make a suggestion? Why not add that the Marchioness of Tuscany has interceded with the Pope that he should be received?

Donna Matilda. You see, he has recognized me!

Landolph. Forgive me . . . I don't know my history very well. I am sure you gentlemen know it much better! But I thought it was believed that Henry IV had a secret passion for the Marchioness of Tuscany.

Donna Matilda. [*At once.*] Nothing of the kind! Nothing of the kind!

Landolph. That's what I thought! But he says he's loved her . . . he's always say-

ing it . . . And now he fears that her indignation against this secret love of his will work him harm with the Pope.

Belcredi. We must let him understand that this aversion no longer exists.

Landolph. Exactly! Of course!

Donna Matilda. [*To BELCREDI.*] History says—I don't know whether you know it or not—that the Pope gave way to the supplications of the Marchioness Matilda and the Abbot of Cluny. And I may say, my dear Belcredi, that I intended to take advantage of this fact—at the time of the pageant—to show him my feelings were not so hostile to him as he supposed.

Belcredi. You are most faithful to history, Marchioness . . .

Landolph. Well then, the Marchioness could spare herself a double disguise and present herself with Monsignor [*Indicating the DOCTOR.*] as the Marchioness of Tuscany.

Doctor. [*Quickly, energetically.*] No, no! That won't do at all. It would ruin everything. The impression from the confrontation must be a sudden one, give a shock! No, no, Marchioness, you will appear again as the Duchess Adelaide, the mother of the Empress. And then we'll go away. This is most necessary: that he should know we've gone away. Come on! Don't let's waste any more time! There's a lot to prepare.

[*Exeunt the DOCTOR, DONNA MATILDA, and LANDOLPH, right.*]

Frida. I am beginning to feel afraid again.

Di Nolli. Again, Frida?

Frida. It would have been better if I had seen him before.

Di Nolli. There's nothing to be frightened of, really.

Frida. He isn't furious, is he?

Di Nolli. Of course not! He's quite calm.

Belcredi. [*With ironic sentimental affectation.*] Melancholy! Didn't you hear that he loves you?

Frida. Thanks! That's just why I am afraid.

Belcredi. He won't do you any harm.

Di Nolli. It'll only last a minute . . .

Frida. Yes, but there in the dark with him . . .

Di Nolli. Only for a moment; and I will be near you, and all the others behind the door ready to run in. As soon as you see your mother, your part will be finished . . .

Belcredi. I'm afraid of a different thing: that we're wasting our time . . .

Di Nolli. Don't begin again! The remedy seems a sound one to me.

Frida. I think so too! I feel it! I'm all trembling!

Belcredi. But, mad people, my dear friends—though they don't know it, alas—have this felicity which we don't take into account . . .

Di Noll. [Interrupting, annoyed.] What felicity? Nonsense!

Belcredi. [Forcefully.] They don't reason!

Di Noll. What's reasoning got to do with it, anyway?

Belcredi. Don't you call it reasoning that he will have to do—according to us—when he sees her [Indicates FRIDA.] and her mother? We've reasoned it all out, surely!

Di Noll. Nothing of the kind: no reasoning at all! We put before him a double image of his own fantasy, or fiction, as the Doctor says.

Belcredi. [Suddenly.] I say, I've never understood why they take degrees in medicine.

Di Noll. [Amazed.] Who?

Belcredi. The alienists!

Di Noll. What ought they to take degrees in, then?

Frida. If they are alienists, in what else should they take degrees?

Belcredi. In law, of course! All a matter of talk! The more they talk, the more highly they are considered. "Analogous elasticity," "the sensation of distance in time"! And the first thing they tell you is that they don't work miracles—when a miracle's just what is wanted! But they know that the more they say they are not miracle-workers, the more folk believe in their seriousness!

Berthold. [Who has been looking through the keyhole of the door on right.] There they are! There they are! They're coming in here.

Di Noll. Are they?

Berthold. He wants to come with them . . . Yes! . . . He's coming too!

Di Noll. Let's get away, then! Let's get away, at once! [To BERTHOLD.] You stop here!

Berthold. Must I?

[Without answering him, DI NOLL, FRIDA, and BELCREDI go out by the main exit, leaving BERTHOLD surprised. The door on the right opens, and LANDOLPH enters first, bowing. Then DONNA MATILDA comes in, with mantle and ducal crown as in the first act; also the DOCTOR as the ABBOT OF CLUNY. HENRY IV is among them in royal dress. ORDULPH and HAROLD enter last of all.]

Henry IV. [Following up what he has

been saying in the other room.] And now I will ask you a question: how can I be astute, if you think me obstinate?

Doctor. No, no, not obstinate!

Henry IV. [Smiling, pleased.] Then you think me really astute?

Doctor. No, no, neither obstinate, nor astute.

Henry IV. [With benevolent irony.] Monsignor, if obstinacy is not a vice which can go with astuteness, I hoped that in denying me the former, you would at least allow me a little of the latter. I can assure you I have great need of it. But if you want to keep it all for yourself . . .

Doctor. I? I? Do I seem astute to you?

Henry IV. No, Monsignor! What do you say? Not in the least! Perhaps in this case, I may seem a little obstinate to you. [Cutting short to speak to DONNA MATILDA.] With your permission: a word in confidence to the Duchess. [Leads her aside and asks her very earnestly.] Is your daughter really dear to you?

Donna Matilda. [Dismayed.] Why, yes, certainly . . .

Henry IV. Do you wish me to compensate her with all my love, with all my devotion, for the grave wrongs I have done her—though you must not believe all the stories my enemies tell about my dissoluteness!

Donna Matilda. No, no, I don't believe them. I never have believed such stories.

Henry IV. Well then, are you willing?

Donna Matilda. [Confused.] What?

Henry IV. That I return to love your daughter again? [Looks at her and adds, in a mysterious tone of warning.] You mustn't be a friend of the Marchioness of Tuscany!

Donna Matilda. I tell you again that she has begged and tried not less than ourselves to obtain your pardon . . .

Henry IV. [Softly, but excitedly.] Don't tell me that! Don't say that to me! Don't you see the effect it has on me, my Lady?

Donna Matilda. [Looks at him; then very softly as if in confidence.] You love her still?

Henry IV. [Puzzled.] Still? Still, you say? You know, then? But nobody knows! Nobody must know!

Donna Matilda. But perhaps she knows, if she has begged so hard for you!

Henry IV. [Looks at her and says.] And you love your daughter. [Brief pause. He turns to the DOCTOR with laughing accents.] Ah, Monsignor, it's strange how little I think of my wife! It may be a sin, but I swear to you that I hardly feel her at all in my heart. What is stranger is that her own

mother scarcely feels her in her heart. Confess, my Lady, that she amounts to very little for you. [*Turning to DOCTOR.*] She talks to me of that other woman, insistently, insistently, I don't know why! . . .

Landolph. [*Humbly.*] Maybe, Majesty, it is to disabuse you of some ideas you have had about the Marchioness of Tuscany. [*Then, dismayed at having allowed himself this observation, adds.*] I mean just now, of course . . .

Henry IV. You too maintain that she has been friendly to me?

Landolph. Yes, at the moment, Majesty.

Donna Matilda. Exactly! Exactly! . . .

Henry IV. I understand. That is to say, you don't believe I love her. I see! I see! Nobody's ever believed it, nobody's ever thought it. Better so, then! But enough, enough! [*Turns to the DOCTOR with changed expression.*] Monsignor, you see? The reasons the Pope has had for revoking the excommunication have got nothing at all to do with the reasons for which he excommunicated me originally. Tell Pope Gregory we shall meet again at Brixen. And you, Madam, should you chance to meet your daughter in the courtyard of the castle of your friend the Marchioness, ask her to visit me. We shall see if I succeed in keeping her close beside me as wife and Empress. Many women have presented themselves here already assuring me that they were she. But they all, even while they told me they came from Susa—I don't know why—began to laugh! And then in the bedroom . . . Well, a man is a man, and a woman is a woman. Undressed, we don't bother much about who we are. And one's dress is like a phantom that hovers always near me. Oh, Monsignor, phantoms in general are nothing more than trifling disorders of the spirit: images we cannot contain within the bounds of sleep. They reveal themselves even when we are awake, and they frighten us. I . . . ah . . . I am always afraid when, at night time, I see disordered images before me. Sometimes I am even afraid of my own blood pulsing loudly in my arteries in the silence of night, like the sound of a distant step in a lonely corridor! . . . But forgive me! I have kept you standing too long already. I thank you, my Lady, I thank you, Monsignor. [*DONNA MATILDA and the DOCTOR go off bowing. As soon as they have gone, HENRY IV suddenly changes his tone.*] Buffoons, buffoons! One can play any tune on them! And that other fellow . . . Pietro Damiani! . . . Caught him out perfectly! He's afraid to appear before me again. [*Moves up and*

down excitedly while saying this; then sees BERTHOLD, and points him out to the other three VALETS.] Oh, look at this imbecile watching me with his mouth wide open. [*Shakes him.*] Don't you understand? Don't you see, idiot, how I treat them, how I play the fool with them, make them appear before me just as I wish? Miserable, frightened clowns that they are! And you [*Addressing the VALETS.*] are amazed that I tear off their ridiculous masks now, just as if it wasn't I who had made them mask themselves to satisfy this taste of mine for playing the madman!

Landolph—Harold—Ordolph. [*Bewildered, looking at one another.*] What? What does he say? What?

Henry IV. [*Answers them imperiously.*] Enough! enough! Let's stop it. I'm tired of it. [*Then as if the thought left him no peace.*] By God! The impudence! To come here along with her lover! . . . And pretending to do it out of pity! So as not to infuriate a poor devil already out of the world, out of time, out of life! If it hadn't been supposed to be done out of pity, one can well imagine that fellow wouldn't have allowed it. Those people expect others to behave as they wish all the time. And, of course, there's nothing arrogant in that! Oh, no! Oh, no! It's merely their way of thinking, of feeling, of seeing. Everybody has his own way of thinking; you fellows, too. Yours is that of a flock of sheep—miserable, feeble, uncertain . . . But those others take advantage of this and make you accept their way of thinking; or, at least, they suppose they do; because, after all, what do they succeed in imposing on you? Words, words which anyone can interpret in his own manner! That's the way public opinion is formed! And it's a bad lookout for a man who finds himself labeled one day with one of these words which everyone repeats; for example "madman," or "imbecile." Don't you think it rather hard for a man to keep quiet, when he knows that there is a fellow going about trying to persuade everybody that he is as he sees him, trying to fix him in other people's opinion as a "madman"—according to him? Now I am talking seriously! Before I hurt my head, falling from my horse . . . [*Stops suddenly, noticing the dismay of the four YOUNG MEN.*] What's the matter with you? [*Imitates their amazed looks.*] What? Am I, or am I not, mad? Oh, yes! I'm mad all right! [*He becomes terrible.*] Well then, by God, down on your knees, down on your knees! [*Makes them go down on their knees one by one.*] I order you to

go down on your knees before me! And touch the ground three times with your foreheads! Down, down! That's the way you've got to be before madmen! [*Then annoyed with their facile humiliation.*] Get up, sheep! You obeyed me, didn't you? You might have put the strait jacket on me! . . . Crush a man with the weight of a word—it's nothing—a fly! all our life is crushed by the weight of words: the weight of the dead. Look at me here: can you really suppose that Henry IV is still alive? All the same, I speak, and order you live men about! Do you think it's a joke that the dead continue to live?—Yes, *here* it's a joke! But get out into the live world!—Ah, you say: what a beautiful sunrise—for us! All time is before us!—Dawn! We will do what we like with this day.—Ah, yes! To Hell with tradition, the old conventions! Well, go on! You will do nothing but repeat the old, old words, while you imagine you are living! [*Goes up to BERTHOLD, who has now become quite stupid.*] You don't understand a word of this, do you? What's your name?

Berthold. I? . . . What? . . . Berthold . . .

Henry IV. Poor Berthold! What's your name here?

Berthold. I . . . I . . . my name is Fino.

Henry IV. [*Feeling the warning and critical glances of the others, turns to them to reduce them to silence.*] Fino?

Berthold. Fino Pagliuca, sire.

Henry IV. [*Turning to LANDOLPH.*] I've heard you call each other by your nicknames often enough! Your name is Lolo, isn't it?

Landolph. Yes, sire . . . [*Then with a sense of immense joy.*] Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord! Then he is not mad . . .

Henry IV. [*Brusquely.*] What?

Landolph. [*Hesitating.*] No . . . I said . . .

Henry IV. Not mad, eh? We're having a joke on those that think I am mad! [*To HAROLD.*] I say, boy, your name's Franco . . . [*To ORDULPH.*] And yours . . .

Ordulph. Momo.

Henry IV. Momo, Momo . . . A nice name that!

Landolph. So he isn't . . .

Henry IV. What are you talking about? Of course not! Let's have a jolly, good laugh! . . . [*Laughs.*] Ah! . . . Ah! . . . Ah! . . .

Landolph—Harold—Ordulph. [*Looking at each other half happy and half dismayed.*] Then he's cured! . . . he's all right! . . .

Henry IV. Silence! Silence! . . . [*To BERTHOLD.*] Why don't you laugh? Are you offended? I didn't mean it especially for

you. It's convenient for everybody to insist that certain people are mad, so they can be shut up. Do you know why? Because it's impossible to hear them speak! What shall I say of these people who've just gone away? That one is a whore, another a libertine, another a swindler . . . don't you think so? You can't believe a word he says . . . don't you think so?—By the way, they all listen to me terrified. And why are they terrified, if what I say isn't true? Of course, you can't believe what madmen say—yet, at the same time, they stand there with their eyes wide open with terror!—Why? Tell me, tell me, why?—You see I'm quite calm now!

Berthold. But, perhaps, they think that . . .

Henry IV. No, no, my dear fellow! Look me well in the eyes! . . . I don't say that it's true—nothing is true, Berthold! But . . . look me in the eyes!

Berthold. Well . . .

Henry IV. You see? You see? . . . You have terror in your own eyes now because I seem mad to you! There's the proof of it!

[*Laughs.*]

Landolph. [*Coming forward in the name of the others, exasperated.*] What proof?

Henry IV. Your being so dismayed because now I seem again mad to you. You have thought me mad up to now, haven't you? You feel that this dismay of yours can become terror too—something to dash away the ground from under your feet and deprive you of the air you breathe! Do you know what it means to find yourselves face to face with a madman—with one who shakes the foundations of all you have built up in yourselves, your logic, the logic of all your constructions? Madmen, lucky folk! construct without logic, or rather with a logic that flies like a feather. Voluble! Voluble! Today like this and tomorrow—who knows? You say: "This cannot be"; but for them everything can be. You say: "This isn't true!" And why? Because it doesn't seem true to you, or you, or you . . . [*Indicates the three of them in succession.*] . . . and to a hundred thousand others! One must see what seems true to these hundred thousand others who are not supposed to be mad! What a magnificent spectacle they afford when they reason! What flowers of logic they scatter! I know that when I was a child, I thought the moon in the pond was real. How many things I thought real! I believed everything I was told—and I was happy! Because it's a terrible thing if you don't hold on to that which seems true to you today—to that which will seem true to

you tomorrow, even if it is the opposite of that which seemed true to you yesterday. I would never wish you to think, as I have done, on this horrible thing which really drives one mad: that if you were beside another and looking into his eyes—as I one day looked into somebody's eyes—you might as well be a beggar before a door never to be opened to you; for he who does enter there will never be you, but someone unknown to you with his own different and impenetrable world . . . [*Long pause. Darkness gathers in the room, increasing the sense of strangeness and consternation in which the four YOUNG MEN are involved. HENRY IV remains aloof, pondering on the misery which is not only his, but everybody's. Then he pulls himself up, and says in an ordinary tone.*] It's getting dark here . . .

Ordulph. Shall I go for a lamp?

Henry IV. [*Ironically.*] The lamp, yes, the lamp! . . . Do you suppose I don't know that as soon as I turn my back with my oil lamp to go to bed, you turn on the electric light for yourselves, here, and even there, in the throne room? I pretend not to see it!

Ordulph. Well, then, shall I turn it on now?

Henry IV. No, it would blind me! I want my lamp!

Ordulph. It's ready here behind the door.

[*Goes to the main exit, opens the door, goes out for a moment, and returns with an ancient lamp, which is held by a ring at the top.*]

Henry IV. Ah, a little light! Sit there around the table, no, not like that; in an elegant, easy manner! . . . [*To HAROLD.*] Yes, you, like that! [*Poses him. Then to BERTHOLD.*] You, so! . . . and I, here! [*Sits opposite them.*] We could do with a little decorative moonlight. It's very useful for us, the moonlight. I feel a real necessity for it, and pass a lot of time looking up at the moon from my window. Who would think, to look at her, that she knows that eight hundred years have passed, and that I, seated at the window, cannot really be Henry IV gazing at the moon like any poor devil? But, look, look! See what a magnificent night scene we have here: the emperor surrounded by his faithful counsellors! . . . How do you like it?

Landolph. [*Softly to HAROLD, so as not to break the enchantment.*] And to think it wasn't true! . . .

Henry IV. True? What wasn't true?

Landolph. [*Timidly as if to excuse himself.*] No . . . I mean . . . I was saying this morning to him [*Indicates BERTHOLD.*]

—he has just entered on service here—I was saying: what a pity that dressed like this and with so many beautiful costumes in the wardrobe . . . and with a room like that . . .

[*Indicates the throne room.*]

Henry IV. Well? what's the pity?

Landolph. Well . . . that we didn't know . . .

Henry IV. That it was all done in jest, this comedy?

Landolph. Because we thought that . . .

Harold. [*Coming to his assistance.*] Yes . . . that it was done seriously!

Henry IV. What do you say? Doesn't it seem serious to you?

Landolph. But if you say that . . .

Henry IV. I say that—you are fools! You ought to have known how to create a fantasy for yourselves, not to act it for me, or anyone coming to see me; but naturally, simply, day by day, before nobody, feeling yourselves alive in the history of the eleventh century, here at the court of your emperor, Henry IV! You, Ordulph [*Taking him by the arm.*], alive in the castle of Goslar, waking up in the morning, getting out of bed, and entering straightway into the dream, clothing yourself in the dream that would be no more a dream, because you would have lived it, felt it all alive in you. You would have drunk it in with the air you breathed; yet knowing all the time that it was a dream, so you could better enjoy the privilege afforded you of having to do nothing else but live this dream, this far-off and yet actual dream! And to think that at a distance of eight centuries from this remote age of ours, so colored and so sepulchral, the men of the twentieth century are torturing themselves in ceaseless anxiety to know how their fates and fortunes will work out! Whereas you are already in history with me . . .

Landolph. Yes, yes, very good!

Henry IV. . . . Everything determined, everything settled!

Ordulph. Yes, yes!

Henry IV. And sad as is my lot, hideous as some of the events are, bitter the struggles and troublous the time—still all history! All history that cannot change, understand? All fixed for ever! And you could have admired at your ease how every effect followed obediently its cause with perfect logic, how every event took place precisely and coherently in each minute particular! The pleasure, the pleasure of history, in fact, which is so great, was yours.

Landolph. Beautiful, beautiful!

Henry IV. Beautiful, but it's finished! Now that you know, I could not do it any

more! [*Takes his lamp to go to bed.*] Neither could you, if up to now you haven't understood the reason of it! I am sick of it now. [*Almost to himself with violent contained rage.*] By God, I'll make her sorry she came here! Dressed herself up as a mother-in-law for me . . . ! And he as an abbot. . . ! And they bring a doctor with them to study me . . . ! Who knows if they don't hope to cure me? . . . Clowns . . . ! I'd like to smack one of them at least in the face; yes, that one—a famous swordsman, they say! . . . He'll kill me . . . Well, we'll see, we'll see! . . . [*A knock at the door.*] Who is it?

The Voice of John. Deo gratias!

Harold. [*Very pleased at the chance for another joke.*] Oh, it's John, it's old John, who comes every night to play the monk.

Ordulph. [*Rubbing his hands.*] Yes, yes! Let's make him do it!

Henry IV. [*At once, severely.*] Fool, why? Just to play a joke on a poor old man who does it for love of me?

Landolph. [*To ORDULPH.*] It has to be as if it were true.

Henry IV. Exactly, as if true! Because, only so, truth is not a jest. [*Opens the door and admits JOHN dressed as a humble friar with a roll of parchment under his arm.*] Come in, come, Father! [*Then assuming a tone of tragic gravity and deep resentment.*] All the documents of my life and reign favorable to me were destroyed deliberately by my enemies. One only has escaped destruction, this, my life, written by a humble monk who is devoted to me. And you would laugh at him. [*Turns affectionately to JOHN, and invites him to sit down at the table.*] Sit down, Father, sit down! Have the lamp near you! [*Puts the lamp near him.*] Write! Write!

John. [*Opens the parchment and prepares to write from dictation.*] I am ready, your Majesty!

Henry IV. [*Dictating.*] "The decree of peace proclaimed at Mayence helped the poor and humble, while it damaged the wicked and the powerful. [*Curtain begins to fall.*] It brought wealth to the former, hunger and misery to the latter . . ."

CURTAIN

ACT III

The throne room, so dark that the wall at the bottom is hardly seen. The canvases of the two portraits have been taken away; and, within their frames, FRIDA, dressed as the "Marchioness of Tuscany" and CHARLES DI NOLLI, as "Henry IV," have taken the exact positions of the portraits.

[*For a moment, after the raising of curtain, the stage is empty. Then the door on the left opens; and HENRY IV, holding the lamp by the ring on top of it, enters. He looks back to speak to the four YOUNG MEN who, with JOHN, are presumed in the adjoining hall, as at the end of the second act.*]

Henry IV. No: stay where you are, stay where you are. I shall manage all right by myself. Good night!

[*Closes the door and walks, very sad and tired, across the hall toward the second door on the right, which leads into his apartments.*]

Frida. [*As soon as she sees that he has just passed the throne, whispers from the*

niche like one who is on the point of fainting away with fright.] Henry . . .

Henry IV. [*Stopping at the voice, as if someone had stabbed him traitorously in the back, turns a terror-stricken face toward the wall at the bottom of the room; raising an arm instinctively, as if to defend himself and ward off a blow.*] Who is calling me?

[*It is not a question, but an exclamation vibrating with terror, which does not expect a reply from the darkness and the terrible silence of the hall, which suddenly fills him with the suspicion that he is really mad.*]

Frida. [*At his shudder of terror, is herself not less frightened at the part she is playing, and repeats a little more loudly.*] Henry! . . .

[*But, although she wishes to act the part as they have given it to her, she stretches her head a little out of the frame toward the other frame. HENRY IV gives a dreadful cry; lets the lamp fall from his hands to cover his head with his arms, and makes a movement as if to run away.*]

Frida. [Jumping from the frame on to the stand and shouting like a mad woman.] Henry! . . . Henry! . . . I'm afraid! . . . I'm terrified! . . .

[And while DI NOLLI jumps in turn on to the stand and thence to the floor and runs to FRIDA, who, on the verge of fainting, continues to cry out, the DOCTOR, DONNA MATILDA, also dressed as "Matilda of Tuscany," TITO BELCREDI, LANDOLPH, BERTHOLD, HAROLD, and ORDULPH enter the hall from the doors on the right and on the left. One of them turns on the light: a strange light coming from lamps hidden in the ceiling so that only the upper part of the stage is well lighted. The others, without taking notice of HENRY IV, who, after the moment of terror which still causes him to tremble, looks on astonished by the unexpected inrush, run anxiously to support and comfort the still shaking FRIDA, who is moaning in the arms of her fiancé. All are speaking at the same time.]

Di Nolli. No, no, Frida . . . Here I am . . . I am beside you!

Doctor. [Coming with the others.] Enough! Enough! There's nothing more to be done! . . .

Donna Matilda. He is cured, Frida. Look! He is cured! Don't you see?

Di Nolli. [Astonished.] Cured?

Belcredi. It was only for fun! Be calm!

Frida. No! I am afraid! I am afraid!

Donna Matilda. Afraid of what? Look at him! He was never mad at all! . . .

Di Nolli. That isn't true! What are you saying? Cured?

Doctor. It appears so. I should say so . . .

Belcredi. Yes, yes! They have told us so.

[Pointing to the four YOUNG MEN.]

Donna Matilda. Yes, for a long time! He has confided in them, told them the truth!

Di Nolli. [Now more indignant than astonished.] But what does it mean? If, up to a short time ago . . . ?

Belcredi. Hum! He was acting, to take you in and also us, who in good faith . . .

Di Nolli. Is it possible? To deceive his sister, also, right up to the time of her death?

Henry IV. [Remains apart, peering at one and now at the other under the accusation and the mockery of what all believe to be a cruel joke of his, which is now revealed. He has shown by the flashing of his eyes that he is meditating a revenge, which his violent contempt prevents him from defining clearly,

as yet. Stung to the quick and with a clear idea of accepting the fiction they have insidiously worked up as true, he bursts forth at this point.] Go on, I say! Go on!

Di Nolli. [Astonished at the cry.] Go on! What do you mean?

Henry IV. It isn't your sister only that is dead!

Di Nolli. My sister? Yours, I say, whom you compelled up to the last moment, to present herself here as your mother Agnes!

Henry IV. And was she not your mother?

Di Nolli. My mother? Certainly my mother!

Henry IV. But your mother is dead for me, old and far away! You have just got down from there. [Pointing to the frame from which he jumped down.] And how do you know whether I have not wept her long in secret, dressed even as I am?

Donna Matilda. [Dismayed, looking at the others.] What does he say? [Much impressed, observing him.] Quietly! quietly, for Heaven's sake!

Henry IV. What do I say? I ask all of you if Agnes was not the mother of Henry IV? [Turns to FRIDA as if she were really the Marchioness of Tuscany.] You, Marchioness, it seems to me, ought to know.

Frida. [Still frightened, draws closer to DI NOLLI.] No, no, I don't know. Not I!

Doctor. It's the madness returning. . . . Quiet now, everybody!

Belcredi. [Indignant.] Madness indeed, Doctor! He's acting again! . . .

Henry IV. [Suddenly.] I? You have emptied those two frames over there, and he stands before my eyes as Henry IV. . . .

Belcredi. We've had enough of this joke now.

Henry IV. Who said joke?

Doctor. [Loudly to BELCREDI.] Don't excite him, for the love of God!

Belcredi. [Without lending an ear to him, but speaking louder.] But they have said so— [Pointing again to the four YOUNG MEN.] they, they!

Henry IV. [Turning round and looking at them.] You? Did you say it was all a joke?

Landolph. [Timid and embarrassed.] No . . . really we said that you were cured.

Belcredi. Look here! Enough of this! [To DONNA MATILDA.] Doesn't it seem to you that the sight of him [Pointing to DI NOLLI], Marchioness, and that of your daughter dressed so, is becoming an intolerable puerility?

Donna Matilda. Oh, be quiet! What does the dress matter, if he is cured?

Henry IV. Cured, yes! I am cured! [To BELCREDI.] Ah, but not to let it end this way all at once, as you suppose! [Attacks him.] Do you know that for twenty years nobody has ever dared to appear before me here like you and that gentleman?

[Pointing to the DOCTOR.]

Belcredi. Of course I know it. As a matter of fact, I too appeared before you this morning dressed . . .

Henry IV. As a monk, yes!

Belcredi. And you took me for Peter Damiani! And I didn't even laugh, believing, in fact, that . . .

Henry IV. That I was mad! Does it make you laugh seeing her like that, now that I am cured? And yet you might have remembered that in my eyes her appearance now . . . [Interrupts himself with a gesture of contempt.] Ah! [Suddenly turns to the DOCTOR.] You are a doctor, aren't you?

Doctor. Yes.

Henry IV. And you also took part in dressing her up as the Marchioness of Tuscany? To prepare a counter-joke for me here, eh?

Donna Matilda. [Impetuously.] No, no! What do you say? It was done for you! I did it for your sake.

Doctor. [Quickly.] To attempt, to try, not knowing . . .

Henry IV. [Cutting him short.] I understand. I say counter-joke, in his case [Indicates BELCREDI.], because he believes that I have been carrying on a jest . . .

Belcredi. But excuse me, what do you mean? You say yourself you are cured.

Henry IV. Let me speak. [To the DOCTOR.] Do you know, Doctor, that for a moment you ran the risk of making me mad again? By God, to make the portraits speak; to make them jump alive out of their frames . . .

Doctor. But you saw that all of us ran in at once, as soon as they told us . . .

Henry IV. Certainly. [Contemplates FRIDA and DI NOLLI, and then looks at the MARCHIONESS, and finally at his own costume.] The combination is very beautiful . . . Two couples . . . Very good, very good, Doctor! For a madman, not bad! . . . [With a slight wave of his hand to BELCREDI.] It seems to him now to be a carnival out of season, eh? [Turns to look at him.] We'll get rid now of this masquerade costume of mine, so that I may come away with you. What do you say?

Belcredi. With me? With us?

Henry IV. Where shall we go? To the Club? In dress coats and with white ties?

Or shall both of us go to the Marchioness' house?

Belcredi. Whatever you like! Do you want to remain here still, to continue—alone—what was nothing but the unfortunate joke of a day of carnival? It is really incredible, incredible how you have been able to do all this, freed from the disaster that befell you!

Henry IV. Yes, you see how it was! The fact is that falling from my horse and striking my head as I did, I was really mad for I know not how long . . .

Doctor. Ah! Did it last long?

Henry IV. [Very quickly to the DOCTOR.] Yes, Doctor, a long time! I think it must have been about twelve years. [Then suddenly turning to speak to BELCREDI.] Thus I saw nothing, my dear fellow, of all that, after that day of carnival, happened for you but not for me: how things changed, how my friends deceived me, how my place was taken by another, and all the rest of it! And suppose my place had been taken in the heart of the woman I loved? . . . And how should I know who was dead or who had disappeared? . . . All this, you know, wasn't exactly a jest for me, as it seems to you . . .

Belcredi. No, no! I don't mean that, if you please. I mean after . . .

Henry IV. Ah, yes? After? One day [Stops and addresses the DOCTOR.] —A most interesting case, Doctor! Study me well! Study me carefully! [Trembles while speaking.] All by itself, who knows how, one day the trouble here [Touches his forehead.] mended. Little by little, I open my eyes, and at first I don't know whether I am asleep or awake. Then I know I am awake. I touch this thing and that; I see clearly again . . . Ah!—then, as he says [Alludes to BELCREDI.], away, away with this masquerade, this incubus! Let's open the windows, breathe life once again! Away! Away! Let's run out! [Suddenly pulling himself up.] But where? And to do what? To show myself to all, secretly, as Henry IV, not like this, but arm in arm with you, among my dear friends?

Belcredi. What are you saying?

Donna Matilda. Who could think it? It's not to be imagined. It was an accident.

Henry IV. They all said I was mad before. [To BELCREDI.] And you know it! You were more ferocious than any one against those who tried to defend me.

Belcredi. Oh, that was only a joke!

Henry IV. Look at my hair!

[Shows him the hair on the nape of his neck.]

Belcredi. But mine is gray too!

Henry IV. Yes, with this difference: that mine went gray here, as Henry IV, do you understand? And I never knew it! I perceived it all of a sudden, one day, when I opened my eyes; and I was terrified because I understood at once that not only had my hair gone gray, but that I was all gray, inside; that everything had fallen to pieces, that everything was finished; and I was going to arrive, hungry as a wolf, at a banquet which had already been cleared away . . .

Belcredi. Yes, but what about the others? . . .

Henry IV. [Quickly.] Ah, yes, I know! They couldn't wait until I was cured, not even those, who, behind my back, pricked my saddled horse till it bled. . . .

Di Noll. [Agitated.] What, what?

Henry IV. Yes, treacherously, to make it rear and cause me to fall.

Dona Matilda. [Quickly, in horror.] This is the first time I knew that.

Henry IV. That was also a joke, probably?

Dona Matilda. But who did it? Who was behind us, then?

Henry IV. It doesn't matter who it was. All those that went on feasting and were ready to leave me their scrapings, Marchioness, of miserable pity, or some dirty remnant of remorse in the filthy plate! Thanks! [Turning quickly to the Doctor.] Now, Doctor, the case must be absolutely new in the history of madness; I preferred to remain mad—since I found everything ready and at my disposal for this new exquisite fantasy. I would live it—this madness of mine—with the most lucid consciousness; and thus revenge myself on the brutality of a stone which had dented my head. The solitude—this solitude—squalid and empty as it appeared to me when I opened my eyes again—I determined to deck it out with all the colors and splendors of that far-off day of carnival, when you [Looks at DONNA MATILDA and points FRIDA out to her.], when you, Marchioness, triumphed. So I would oblige all those who were around me to follow, by God, at my orders that famous pageant which had been—for you and not for me—the jest of a day. I would make it become—for ever—no more a joke but a reality, the reality of a real madness: here, all in masquerade, with throne room, and these my four secret counsellors: secret and, of course, traitors. [He turns quickly toward them.] I should like to know what you have gained by revealing the fact that I was

cured! If I am cured, there's no longer any need of you, and you will be discharged! To give anyone one's confidence . . . that is really the act of a madman. But now I accuse you in my turn! [Turning to the others.] Do you know? They thought [Alludes to the VALETS.] they could make fun of me too with you.

[Bursts out laughing. The others laugh, but shamefacedly, except DONNA MATILDA.]

Belcredi. [To DI NOLLI.] Well, imagine that . . . That's not bad . . .

Di Noll. [To the four YOUNG MEN.] You?

Henry IV. We must pardon them. This dress [Plucking his dress.] which is for me the evident, involuntary caricature of that other continuous, everlasting masquerade, of which we are the involuntary puppets [Indicates BELCREDI.], when, without knowing it, we mask ourselves with that which we appear to be . . . ah, that dress of theirs, this masquerade of theirs, of course, we must forgive it them, since they do not yet see it is identical with themselves . . . [Turning again to BELCREDI.] You know, it is quite easy to get accustomed to it. One walks about as a tragic character, just as if it were nothing . . . [Imitates the tragic manner.] in a room like this . . . Look here, Doctor! I remember a priest, certainly Irish, a nice-looking priest, who was sleeping in the sun one November day, with his arm on the corner of the bench of a public garden. He was lost in the golden delight of the mild sunny air which must have seemed for him almost summery. One may be sure that in that moment he did not know any more that he was a priest, or even where he was. He was dreaming . . . A little boy passed with a flower in his hand. He touched the priest with it here on the neck. I saw him open his laughing eyes, while all his mouth smiled with the beauty of his dream. He was forgetful of everything . . . But all at once, he pulled himself together, and stretched out his priest's cassock; and there came back to his eyes the same seriousness which you have seen in mine; because the Irish priests defend the seriousness of their Catholic faith with the same zeal with which I defend the secret rights of hereditary monarchy! I am cured, gentlemen: because I can act the madman to perfection, here; and I do it very quietly. I'm only sorry for you that have to live your madness so agitatedly, without knowing it or seeing it.

Belcredi. It comes to this, then, that it is we who are mad. That's what it is!

Henry IV. [*Containing his irritation.*] But if you weren't mad, both you and she [*Indicating the MARCHIONESS.*], would you have come here to see me?

Belcredi. To tell the truth, I came here believing that you were the madman.

Henry IV. [*Suddenly indicating the MARCHIONESS.*] And she?

Belcredi. Ah, as for her . . . I can't say. I see she is all fascinated by your words, by this conscious madness of yours. [*Turns to her.*] Dressed as you are [*Speaking to her.*], you could even remain here to live it out, Marchioness.

Donna Matilda. You are insolent!

Henry IV. [*Conciliatingly.*] No, Marchioness, what he means to say is that the miracle would be complete, according to him, with you here, who—as the Marchioness of Tuscany, you well know,—could not be my friend, save, as at Canossa, to give me a little pity . . .

Belcredi. Or even more than a little! She said so herself!

Henry IV. [*To the MARCHIONESS, continuing.*] And even, shall we say, a little remorse. . . .

Belcredi. Yes, that too she has admitted.

Donna Matilda. [*Angry.*] Now look here . . .

Henry IV. [*Quickly, to placate her.*] Don't bother about him! Don't mind him! Let him go on infuriating me—though the Doctor's told him not to. [*Turns to BELCREDI.*] But do you suppose I am going to trouble myself any more about what happened between us—the share you had in my misfortune with her [*Indicates the MARCHIONESS to him and, pointing BELCREDI out to her.*], the part he has now in your life? This is my life! Quite a different thing from your life! Your life, the life in which you have grown old—I have not lived that life. [*To DONNA MATILDA.*] Was this what you wanted to show me with this sacrifice of yours, dressing yourself up like this, according to the Doctor's idea? Excellently done, Doctor! Oh, an excellent idea:—"As we were then, eh? and as we are now?" But I am not a madman according to your way of thinking, Doctor. I know very well that that man there [*Indicates DI NOLLI.*] cannot be me; because I am Henry IV, and have been, these twenty years, cast in this eternal masquerade. She has lived these years! [*Indicates the MARCHIONESS.*] She has enjoyed them and has become—look at her!—a woman I can no longer recognize. It is so

that I knew her! [*Points to FRIDA and draws near her.*] This is the Marchioness I know, always this one! . . . You seem a lot of children to be so easily frightened by me . . . [*To FRIDA.*] And you're frightened too, little girl, aren't you, by the jest that they made you take part in—though they didn't understand it wouldn't be the jest they meant it to be, for me? Oh miracle of miracles! Prodigy of prodigies! The dream alive in you! More than alive in you! It was an image that wavered there and they've made you come to life! Oh, mine! You're mine, mine, mine, in my own right! [*He holds her in his arms, laughing like a madman, while all stand still terrified. Then as they advance to tear FRIDA from his arms, he becomes furious, terrible, and cries imperiously to his VALETS.*] Hold them! Hold them! I order you to hold them!

[*The four YOUNG MEN amazed, yet fascinated, move to execute his orders, automatically, and seize DI NOLLI, the DOCTOR, and BELCREDI.*]

Belcredi. [*Freeing himself.*] Leave her alone! Leave her alone! You're no madman!

Henry IV. [*In a flash draws the sword from the side of LANDOLPH, who is close to him.*] I'm not mad, eh! Take that, you! . . .

[*Drives sword into him. A cry of horror goes up. All rush over to assist BELCREDI, crying out together.*]

Di Nolli. Has he wounded you?

Berthold. Yes, yes, seriously!

Doctor. I told you so!

Frida. Oh God, oh God!

Di Nolli. Frida, come here!

Donna Matilda. He's mad, mad!

Di Nolli. Hold him!

Belcredi. [*While they take him away by the left exit, he protests as he is borne out.*] No, no, you're not mad! You're not mad. He's not mad!

[*They go out by the left amid cries and excitement. After a moment, one hears a still sharper, more piercing cry from DONNA MATILDA, and then, silence.*]

Henry IV. [*Who has remained on the stage between LANDOLPH, HAROLD, and ORDULPH, with his eyes almost starting out of his head, terrified by the life of his own masquerade which has driven him to crime.*] Ah now . . . yes now . . . inevitably [*Calls his VALETS around him as if to protect him.*] here together . . . here together . . . for ever . . . for ever.

AH, WILDERNESS!*

A Comedy of Recollection

By

EUGENE O'NEILL

"Weary am I of tumult, sick of the staring crowd,
Pining for wild sea places where the soul
may think aloud."

THESE LINES FROM HIS YOUTHFUL poem "Free" were a revealing prologue to Eugene O'Neill's actual escapes and adventures when, after expulsion from Princeton at the age of twenty, he earned his way by land and sea through the Americas and as far as Durban on the East African coast, and ended up a derelict "on the beach" near Buenos Aires. Then finding life in a New York dive—the setting for his *Anna Christie*—even less friendly, he shipped once more as able seaman on a return voyage to Southampton. Home at last and penniless, he joined his father's troupe as actor in bit parts and as manager.

His empty purse, he later realized, was counterweighted by a playwright's wealth acquired during his otherwise luckless adventures: an intimate understanding of raw humanity, not without its glimpses of worth, of courage, and even of beauty hidden deep in his seamates' reality. Besides, though schooled as son of a declaimer of English at its best, he had also acquired a variety of seamen's dialects later to be used in masterly fashion in his earliest plays, much as O'Casey gives poetic beauty and dramatic force to dialogue of Gaelic flavor.

Those to whom this dramatic innovator of earlier decades seems a newcomer on the present Broadway stages may wish to know by what efforts so unpromising a youth made himself a creative force in world drama, for during the period preceding World War II O'Neill's plays, because of their unique vitality, were widely produced not alone in America but throughout Europe, including Russia, where his daring dramaturgy, similar to the Soviets' own, was greatly ad-

mired by the Reds. Even Bernard Shaw, addressing a London school of drama, advised his hearers to begin their study with O'Neill's innovating plays rather than his own of a passing theatre epoch.

During his all but homeless early life as the son of a traveling actor, Eugene had become aloof and introspective, but was aware of a driving force within, akin to the poet's, as he pictured himself in *A Long Day's Journey Into Night*. This latent talent he strove unrelentingly to cultivate, despite innate libertinism, tubercular weakness, alcoholism, and asocial recklessness, any one of which tendencies might have been the ruin of a less determined genius. Having failed at Princeton, Eugene became his own educator, like many of the theatre great from Shakespeare to Shaw and O'Casey. Barrett Clark quotes him as declaring: "I read about everything I could lay my hands on: the Greeks [note his *Mourning Becomes Electra*], the Elizabethans, practically all the classics, and, of course, all the moderns, Ibsen and Strindberg—especially Strindberg." His persistence as writer was even more remarkable. A Provincetown pal told how "he would wrap himself in a blanket, stick an oil-burner under him, and write hour after hour." Yet he could be agreeable, as Mrs. Edith Isaacs, former editor of *Theatre Arts*, has assured us: "With his close friends he was simple, lovable, open-hearted . . . but eternally perplexed, hard-working, and distinctly over-productive." As we know, he ruthlessly destroyed play after play that he felt bound to condemn.

Negatively, his year spent as a minor actor in his father's immensely popular production of *The Count of Monte Cristo* had important educational value, for it made him a sworn rebel against the outworn staginess of Victorian theatricality. Deserting the troupe, he found employment that has furnished matter for many other playwrights: that of reporter on the New London Tele-

* Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.

graph, the editor of which was model for his Nat Miller of *Ah, Wilderness!*

Aware that his few attempts at play building were faulty, he enrolled in Professor George Pierce Baker's playwrighting course (47 Workshop) at Harvard. His disappointment in the class lectures covering much that O'Neill already knew was counterbalanced by the essential gift of a true teacher, regarding which student O'Neill testified: "Yes, I did get a great deal from Baker—personally. He encouraged me, made me feel it was worth while to go ahead. My personal association with him meant the devil of a lot to me." About this student, Baker commented: "He showed by the end of this year that he knew how to write well in the one-act form, but he could not yet manage the longer forms. I was eager that he should return for a second year of work." But financially a second year was impossible.

At this point good fortune intervened. During the summer of 1916 at Provincetown, Eugene found himself in the midst of a small troupe of drama reformers as eager as he himself. On the second bill of their curious little Wharf Theatre appeared *Bound East for Cardiff*, O'Neill's first play to be produced anywhere. Naming themselves the Provincetown Players, they invaded New York's Greenwich Village, which, chiefly because of O'Neill's many contributions, became the most important off-Broadway experimental center that it still is. During the following decade the Players produced most of O'Neill's early works; spreading his fame while he greatly increased their own.

In 1920-1921 his relatively conventional *Beyond the Horizon* and *Anna Christie* both received the Pulitzer prize, and *The Emperor Jones*, with Charles Gilpin and later Paul Robeson in the part became an hypnotic stage miracle in monologue that defied all theatre conventions. Its accelerating drum-beat measuring the negro's mounting terror electrified the audience and announced the advent of an American expressionist of great ingenuity. By 1927 O'Neill had risen to the distinction of the New York Theatre Guild's favored dramatist following their successful mounting of his lengthy (five-hour) *Strange Interlude*, which made new expressionistic use of the age-old aside, and added the hoped-for American variety of this European technique to their repertory of plays by Toller and other foreign experimenters. Hardly ever has a dramatist opened so widely and speedily the highly conventional stage medium to new styles and moods as did O'Neill in the ten years of his early, strenuous productivity.

No American playwright since the twenties could feel himself any longer confined to the "water-tight" and "four-walled" play form of Ibsen and other photographic naturalists.

But O'Neill's novelty was not merely defiance of convention; his more important aim was to find fresh and effective ways to project the mood and thought inherent in the characters and dramatic situations he chose to exploit. Freedom to choose means of expression and emphasis laid on what he called "the behind-life" of characters, were his really important and lasting "innovations"—not innovations at all, for they were the unwritten laws of drama from the times of its Egyptian and Greek origins, a study of which had increased O'Neill's urge to reclaim their freedoms and minimize the confinement of the picture-frame theatre. And to this same end, he insisted on apt and meaningful settings, whether radically symbolic, as in *The Hairy Ape*, or fittingly idealized, as in the Greek-inspired *Mourning Becomes Electra*, or realistically Victorian, as in *Ah, Wilderness!*, for what could better symbolize the moral stuffiness of this satirical comedy than the stuffiness of the Victorian theatre? The reader should not pass over lightly O'Neill's mood-creating stage directions.

But *Ah, Wilderness!*, outwardly a delightful, conventional comedy of manners, is by no means without suggestion of "behind-life." At the final curtain we sense the depth of family love; its perversions and hypocrisies that have produced Sid and pathetic Lily; the urge for mental independence—the dramatist's own—in Richard; the age-old parental, but threatened, severity of Nat, against which the characters variously strive to be themselves—and all depicted in O'Neill's most genial vein of satire. His masterly exploitation of this always disarmingly enjoyable dramatic simplicity gives this play, if only as a period piece, a universality and very likely a more lasting stage value than his more drastic experiments in the earlier works. It should also persuade those who have decried O'Neill's claim to greatness, asserting that his plays, without the experimental novelties, were below such distinction, to concede that he is as versatile and substantial a dramatist as America has produced. Nevertheless, we must admit, as many of his admirers do, that as pure literature the plays contain little of lasting greatness; but such ambition was farthest from O'Neill's intent. His genius and his bent, as his devoted friend Nathan defined

them, were: "to delve into and appraise character . . . his sweep and pulse and high resolve, his command of a stage . . . and his mastery of the intricacies of dramaturgy." And we may add: he had an infallible instinct as to what was fitting and dramatically effective to do or to say at any moment in a scene on stage.

The mounting of *Ah, Wilderness!* in the Theatre Guild's best manner, with the inspired selection of George M. Cohan for the part of Nat, that he appeared not to act but

actually to be, was an unforgettable Broadway event. It was perhaps significant, after O'Neill's more sensational departures from convention had won him all the theatre freedom he could wish, that in *Ah, Wilderness!* and in his last great creation, *A Long Day's Journey into Night*, he found stage realism the most appropriate and most expressive medium he could adopt, when complete fidelity to life was his inevitable obligation. He and the audiences seem to have found it adequate and completely satisfying.

EUGENE GLADSTONE O'NEILL

Born 1888, New York City, son of actor James O'Neill.

1906-1907, Attended Princeton University; suspended for misbehavior.

1909-1911, Period of roaming, seamanship, and varied employments, including prospecting for gold in Central America and office jobs in the United States and South America.

1911-1912, Taken into his father's acting company, playing small roles and helping in business management. Later, a reporter and contributor of verse on staff of New London *Telegraph*.

1913-1914, Hospitalized for tubercular infection; during convalescence wrote his first play, *The Web*. At his father's expense, his first play collection published: *Thirst and Other One-Act Plays*.

1914-1915, Enrolled in Professor George Pierce Baker's playwriting course (47 Workshop) at Harvard.

1916, *Bound East for Cardiff*, his first play produced; staged by the company later known in New York as the Provincetown Players.

1920-1921, *Beyond the Horizon*, his first Broadway production; awarded two Pulitzer prizes, for this and *Anna Christie*. These successes, followed by *Emperor Jones*, established O'Neill's position as America's leading playwright.

1928, Won his third Pulitzer prize for *Strange Interlude*.

1936, Awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

His later years, aside from marital and family involvements, were spent creatively on a vast serialized drama of many full-length divisions treating American history under the title of "A Story of Possessors Dispossessed." Of this incompleting opus he himself destroyed much that he had written. His own family story covering his early life in Connecticut, entitled *A Long Day's Journey Into Night*, he left completed with the request that it should not be produced within

twenty-five years after his death; but it has been a sensational Broadway success of 1957-1958 and, together with the impressive revival of *The Iceman Cometh*, has given the present generation of playgoers convincing evidence of O'Neill's right to be still considered America's foremost dramatist.

Died 1953.

PLAYS

1914 *Thirst and Other One-Act Plays* published (containing *Thirst*, *The Web*, *Warnings*, *Fog*, *Recklessness*). 1916 *Bound East for Cardiff*. 1916 *Before Breakfast*. 1917 *The Sniper* (not published). 1917 *In the Zone*. 1917 *The Long Voyage Home*. 1917 *Ile*. 1918 *The Rope*. 1918 *Where the Cross Is Made*. 1918 *The Moon of the Caribbees*. 1919 *The Dreamy Kid*. 1920 *Beyond the Horizon*. 1920 *Chris Christopherson* (re-written as *Anna Christie*). 1920 *Exorcism* (not published). 1920 *The Emperor Jones*. 1920 *Diff'rent*. 1921 *Gold*. 1921 *Anna Christie*. 1921 *The Straw*. 1922 *The First Man*. 1922 *The Hairy Ape*. 1924 *Welded*. 1924 *The Ancient Mariner* (not published). 1924 *All God's Chillun Got Wings*. 1924 *Desire Under the Elms*. 1924 *S. S. Glencairn* (containing *The Moon of the Caribbees*, *The Long Voyage Home*, *In the Zone*, *Bound East for Cardiff*, united to form a single full-length play). 1925 *The Fountain*. 1926 *The Great God Brown*. 1927 *Marco Millions*. 1927 *Lazarus Laughed*. 1928 *Strange Interlude*. 1929 *Dynamo*. 1931 *Mourning Becomes Electra*. 1933 *Ah, Wilderness!* 1934 *Days Without End*. 1946 *The Iceman Cometh*. 1947 *A Moon for the Misbegotten*. 1950 *Lost Plays: Abortion, The Movie Man, The Sniper, Servitude, A Wife for a Life*.

1956 *A Long Day's Journey Into Night*. 1957 *A Touch of the Poet*. 1958 *Hughie* (one act).

WRITINGS ON DRAMA

(For extensive quotations from O'Neill, written or conversational, see Barrett H. Clark's *Eugene O'Neill; the Man and His Plays*, 1933. On page 12, O'Neill's first brief bit of autobiography is reprinted.)

Letter (about *Beyond the Horizon*) to *New York Times*, April 11, 1920. Letter (about *Anna Christie*) to *New York Times*, December 12, 1921, Sec. 6. Letter (about *The Great God Brown*) headlined "Eugene O'Neill Writes About His Latest Play," *New York Evening Post*, February 13, 1926, reprinted in other New York papers the following day. "O'Neill Talks About *Beyond the Horizon*," *New York Evening Post*, November 27, 1926. Letters from O'Neill to George Jean Nathan in "The Record of a Stimulating Correspondence" by Isaac Goldberg, *Boston Evening Transcript*, December 12, 1925, Sec. 6 (reprinted in Goldberg's *The Theatre of George Jean Nathan*, 1927). Foreword to B. De Casseres' *Anathema*, New York, 1928. "O'Neill's Own Story of 'Electra' in the Making," *New York Herald Tribune*, November 3, 1931.

AH, WILDERNESS!

Characters

NAT MILLER, owner of the "Evening Globe."
ESSIE, his wife.
ARTHUR, their son.
RICHARD, their son.
MILDRED, their daughter.
TOMMY, their son.
SID DAVIS, Essie's brother.
LILY MILLER, Nat's sister.

DAVID MCCOMBER, dry-goods merchant.
MURIEL MCCOMBER, his daughter.
WINT SELBY, a classmate of Arthur's at Yale.
BELLE.
NORA.
BARTENDER.
SALESMAN.

SCENES

- ACT I. *Sitting-room of the Miller home in a large small-town in Connecticut. Early morning, July 4, 1906.*
- ACT II. *Dining-room of the Miller home. Evening of the same day.*
- ACT III. SCENE I. *Back room of a bar in a small hotel. 10 o'clock the same night.*
SCENE II. *The Miller sitting-room. A little after 10 o'clock the same night.*
- ACT IV. SCENE I. *The Miller sitting-room. About 1 o'clock the following afternoon.*
SCENE II. *A strip of beach on the harbor. About 9 o'clock that night.*
SCENE III. *The Miller sitting-room. About 10 o'clock the same night.*

ACT ONE

SCENE I

Sitting-room of the Miller home in a large small-town in Connecticut—about seventy-three in the morning of July 4th, 1906. The room is fairly large, homely looking and cheerful in the morning sunlight, furnished with scrupulous medium-priced tastelessness of the period. Beneath the two windows, right, a sofa with silk and satin cushions stands against the wall. Above sofa, a bookcase with glass doors, filled with cheap sets, extends along the remaining length of wall. In the rear wall, right center, is a double doorway with sliding doors and portieres, leading into a dark, windowless back parlor. At left of this doorway another bookcase, this time a small, open one, crammed with boys' and girls' books and the best-selling novels of many past years—books the family really have read. To the left center is the mate of the double doorway at right center, with sliding doors and portieres, this one leading to a well-lighted front parlor. In the upper left wall, a screen door opens on a porch. Farther forward in this wall are two

windows, with a writing desk and a chair above them. At right center is a big, round table with a green shaded reading lamp, the cord of the lamp running up to one of five sockets in the chandelier above. Four chairs are grouped around the table—two rockers at left, right, rear of it; two armchairs right and left in front. A medium-priced, inoffensive rug covers most of the floor. At left center an armchair; down left a rocker. The walls are papered white with a cheerful ugly blue design.

[VOICES are heard in a conversational tone from the dining-room beyond the back parlor, where the family are just finishing breakfast. Then MRS. MILLER'S voice, raised commandingly: "Tommy! Come back here and finish your milk!" At the same moment, TOMMY appears in the doorway from the back parlor—a chubby, sun-burnt boy of eleven with dark eyes, blond hair wetted and plastered down in a part, and a shiny, good-natured face, a rim of milk visible about his lips. Bursting with bottled-up energy on the Fourth, he

nevertheless has hesitated obediently at his MOTHER's call.]

Tommy. [Calls back pleadingly.] Aw, I'm full, Ma. And I said "excuse me" and you said "all right." [His FATHER's voice is heard speaking to his MOTHER. MILLER—"Oh, let him run about." Then she calls: "All right, Tommy!" And TOMMY asks eagerly.] Can I go out now?

Mother's Voice. [Correctingly.] May I! Tommy. [Fidgeting, but obediently.] May I, Ma?

Mother's Voice. Yes.

[TOMMY jumps for the screen door to the porch like a sprinter released by the starting shot.]

Father's Voice. [Shouts after him.] But you set off your crackers away from the house, remember!

[But TOMMY is already through the screen door, which he leaves open behind him.]

[A moment later the family appear from the back parlor, coming from the dining-room. First is MILDRED. MILDRED is fifteen, tall and slender, with big, irregular features, resembling her father to the complete effacing of any pretence at prettiness. But her big, gray eyes are beautiful. She has vivacity and a fetching smile, and everyone thinks of her as an attractive girl. She is dressed in shirtwaist and skirt in the fashion of the period.]

[ARTHUR enters after MILDRED. He is the eldest of the Miller children who are still living home; is nineteen. He is tall, heavy, barrel-chested and muscular, the type of football linesman of that period, with a square, stolid face, small blue eyes and thick, sandy hair. His manner is solemnly collegiate. He is dressed in the latest college fashion of that day, which has receded a bit from the extreme of preceding years, but still runs to padded shoulders and pants half pegged at the top and so small at their wide-cuffed bottoms that they cannot be taken off with shoes on.]

Mildred. [Inquisitively, as ARTHUR appears.] Where are you going today, Art?

Arthur. [With superior dignity.] That's my business.

[He ostentatiously takes from his pocket a tobacco pouch with a big Y and class numerals stamped on it, and a heavy bulldog briar pipe with silver Y and numerals, and starts filling the pipe.]

Mildred. [Teasingly.] Bet I know, just

the same! Want me to tell you her initials? E. R.!

[She laughs. ARTHUR is pleased by this insinuation at his lady-killing activities, yet finds it beneath his dignity to reply. He lights his pipe and picks up the local morning paper and slouches back into armchair, beginning to whistle "Oh, Waltz Me Around Again, Willie," as he scans the headlines. MILDRED sits on the sofa at right front. Meanwhile their MOTHER and their AUNT LILY, their father's sister, have appeared, following them from back parlor. MRS. MILLER is around fifty, a short, stout woman with fading light-brown hair sprinkled with gray, who must have been decidedly pretty as a girl in a round-faced, cute, small-featured, wide-eyed fashion. She has big, brown eyes, soft and maternal—a bustling, mother-of-a-family manner. She is dressed in shirtwaist and skirt. LILY MILLER, her sister-in-law, is forty-two, tall, dark, thin. She conforms outwardly to the conventional type of old-maid school teacher, even to wearing glasses. But behind the glasses her gray eyes are gentle and tired, and her whole atmosphere is one of shy kindness. Her voice presents the greatest contrast to her appearance—soft and full of sweetness. She, also, is dressed in a shirt-waist and skirt.]

Mrs. Miller. [As they appear.] Getting milk down him is like— [Suddenly she is aware of the screen door standing half open.] Goodness, look at that door he's left open! The house will be alive with flies! I've told him again—and again—and that's all the good it does! It's just a waste of breath!

[She slams the door shut, then crosses to table and gets a magazine, then crosses to rocking chair down left and fans herself with magazine as she talks.]

Lily. [Smiling.] Well, you can't expect a boy to remember to shut doors—on the Fourth of July.

[She goes diffidently to the straight-backed chair before the desk at left, leaving the comfortable chairs to the OTHERS.]

Mrs. Miller. That's you all over—Lily—always making excuses for him. You'll have him spoiled to death in spite of me. Phew, I'm hot, aren't you? This is going to be a scorcher.

[She begins to rock, fanning herself. Meanwhile, her HUSBAND and her BROTHER have appeared from back parlor, both smoking cigars. NAT MIL-

LER is in his late fifties, a tall, dark, spare man, a little stoop-shouldered, more than a little bald, dressed with an awkward attempt at sober respectability imposed upon an innate heedlessness of clothes. His long face has large, irregular, undistinguished features, but he has fine, shrewd, humorous gray eyes. SID DAVIS, his brother-in-law, is forty-five, short and fat, bald-headed, with the Puckish face of a Peck's Bad Boy who has never grown up. He is dressed in what had once been a very natty loud light suit but is now a shapeless and faded nondescript in cut and color.]

Sid. [As they appear.] Oh, I like the job first rate, Nat. Waterbury's a nifty old town with the lid off, when you get to know the ropes. I rang in a joke in one of my stories that tickled the folks there pink. Waterwagon—Waterbury—Waterloo!

Miller. [Grinning.] Darn good!

Sid. [Pleased.] I thought it was pretty fair myself. [Goes on a bit ruefully, as if oppressed by a secret sorrow.] Yes, you can see life in Waterbury, all right—that is, if you're looking for life in Waterbury!

Mrs. Miller. What's this about Waterbury, Sid?

Sid. I was saying it's all right in its way—but there's no place like home.

[As if to punctuate this remark, there begins a series of bangs from just beyond the porch outside, as TOMMY inaugurates his celebration by setting off a package of firecrackers. The assembled family jump in their chairs. SID chuckles.]

Mrs. Miller. That boy! [She rushes to the screen door up left and out on the porch, calling.] Tommy! You mind what your Pa told you! You take your crackers out in the back yard, you hear me!

Tommy. [Off stage.] All right, Ma.

Arthur. [Frowning scornfully.] Fresh kid! He did it on purpose to scare us.

Miller. [Grinning through his annoyance.] Darned youngster! He'll have the house afire before the day's out.

Sid. [Grins and sings.] "Dunno what ter call 'im. But he's mighty like a Rose-velt."

[They ALL laugh.]

Lily. Sid, you crazy!

[SID beams at her. MRS. MILLER comes back from the porch, still fuming.]

Mrs. Miller. Well, I've made him go out back at last. Now we'll have a little peace.

[As if to contradict this, the bang of firecrackers and torpedoes begins from

the rear of the house, left, and continues at intervals throughout the scene, not nearly so loud as the first explosion, but sufficiently emphatic to form a disturbing punctuation to the conversation.]

Miller. Well, what's on the tappee for all of you today? Sid, you're coming to the Sachem Club picnic with me, of course.

Sid. [A bit embarrassedly.] You bet!—That is, if—

Mrs. Miller. [Regarding her BROTHER with smiling suspicion.] Hmmm! I know what that Sachem Club picnic's always meant!

Lily. [Breaks in, in a forced joking tone that conceals a deep earnestness.] No, not this time, Essie. Sid's a reformed character since he's been on the paper in Waterbury. At least, that's what he swore to me last night.

Sid. [Avoiding her eyes, humiliated—joking it off.] Pure as the driven snow, that's me. They're running me for president of the W.C.T.U.

[They ALL laugh. ARTHUR laughs longest.]

Mrs. Miller. Sid, you're a caution. You turn everything into a joke. But you be careful, you hear? We're going to have dinner in the evening tonight, you know—the best shore dinner you ever tasted and I don't want you coming home—well, not able to appreciate it.

Lily. Oh, I know he'll be careful today. Won't you, Sid?

Sid. [More embarrassed than ever—joking it off melodramatically.] Lily, I swear to you if any man offers me a drink, I'll kill him—that is, if he changes his mind!

[They ALL laugh except LILY, who bites her lip and stiffens.]

Mrs. Miller. No use talking to him, Lily. We can only hope for the best.

Miller. Now, you women stop picking on Sid. It's the Fourth of July and even a down-trodden newspaper man has a right to enjoy himself when he's on his holiday.

Mrs. Miller. I wasn't thinking only of Sid. Miller. [With a wink at the OTHERS.] What, are you insinuating I ever—?

Mrs. Miller. Well, to do you justice, no, not what you'd really call—But I've known you to come back from this darned Sachem Club picnic—Well, I didn't need any little bird to whisper that you'd been some place besides to the well!

[She smiles good-naturedly. MILLER chuckles.]

Sid. [After a furtive glance at the stiff and silent LILY—changes the subject abruptly by

turning to ARTHUR.] How are you spending the festive Fourth, Boola-Boola?

[ARTHUR stiffens dignifiedly.]

Mildred. [Teasingly.] I can tell you, if he won't.

Mrs. Miller. [Smiling.] Off to the Rands', I suppose.

Arthur. [With dignity.] I and Bert Turner are taking Elsie and Ethel Rand canoeing. We're going to have a picnic lunch on Strawberry Island. And this evening I'm staying at the Rands' for dinner.

Miller. What about you, Mid?

Mildred. I'm going to the beach to Anne Culver's.

Arthur. [Sarcastically.] Of course, there won't be any boys present! Johnny Dodd, for example?

Mildred. [Giggles—then with a coquettish toss of her head.] Pooh! What do I care for him? He's not the only pebble on the beach.

Miller. Stop your everlasting teasing, you two. How about you and Lily, Essie?

Mrs. Miller. I don't know. I haven't made any plans. Have you, Lily?

Lily. [Quietly.] No. Anything you want to do.

Mrs. Miller. Well, I thought we'd just sit around and rest and talk.

Miller. You can gossip any day. This is the Fourth. Now, I've got a better suggestion than that. What do you say to an automobile ride? I'll get out the Buick and we'll drive around town and out to the lighthouse and back. Then Sid and I will let you off here, or anywhere you say, and we'll go on to the picnic.

Mrs. Miller. I'd love to. Wouldn't you, Lily?

Lily. It would be nice.

Miller. Then, that's all settled.

Sid. [Embarrassedly.] Lily, want to come with me to the fireworks display at the beach tonight?

Mrs. Miller. That's right, Sid. You take her out. Poor Lily never has any fun, always sitting home with me.

Lily. [Flustered and grateful.] I—I'd like to, Sid. Thank you. [Then an apprehensive look comes over her face.] Only not if you come back—you know!

Sid. [Again embarrassed and humiliated—again joking it off, solemnly.] Evil-minded, I'm afraid, Nat. I hate to say it of your sister.

[They ALL laugh. Even LILY cannot suppress a smile.]

Arthur. [With heavy jocularity.] Listen,

Uncle Sid. Don't let me catch you and Aunt Lily spooning on a bench tonight—or it'll be my duty to call a cop!

[SID and LILY look painfully embarrassed at this. The joke falls flat, except for MILDRED, who can't restrain a giggle at the thought of these two ancients spooning.]

Mrs. Miller. [Rebukingly.] Arthur!

Miller. [Dryly.] That'll do you! Kicking a football around Yale seems to have blunted your sense of humor!

Mrs. Miller. [Suddenly—startledly.] But where's Richard? We're forgetting all about him. Why, where is that boy? I thought he came in with us from breakfast.

Mildred. I'll bet he's off somewhere writing a poem to Muriel McComber, the silly! Or pretending to write one. I think he just copies—

Arthur. [Looking back toward the dining-room.] He's still in the dining-room, reading a book. [Turning back—scornfully.] Gosh, he's always reading now. It's not my idea of having a good time in vacation.

Miller. [Caustically.] He read his school books, too, strange as that may seem to you. That's why he came out top of his class. I'm hoping before you leave New Haven they'll find time to teach you reading is a good habit.

Mrs. Miller. [Sharply.] That reminds me, Nat. I've been meaning to speak to you about those awful books Richard is reading. You've got to give him a good talking to—[Starts off.] I'll go up and get them right now. I found them where he'd hid them on the shelf in his wardrobe. You just wait till you see what— [She bustles off.]

Miller. [Plainly not relishing whatever is coming—grumblingly—to SID.] Seems to me she might wait until the Fourth is over before bringing up— [Then with a grin.] I know there's nothing to it, anyway. Gosh, when I think of the books I used to sneak out and read when I was a kid!

Sid. Me, too. I suppose Dick is deep in "Nick Carter" or "Old Cap Collier."

Miller. No, he passed that period long ago. Poetry's his red meat nowadays, I think—love poetry—and Socialism, too, I suspect, from some dire declarations he's made. [Then briskly—with a grin.] Well, might as well get him on the carpet. [He calls.] Richard. [No answer. Louder.] Richard. [No answer—in a bellow.] Richard.

Arthur. [Shouting.] Hey, Dick, wake up! Pa's calling you.

Richard's voice. [From the dining room.] All right. I'm coming.

Miller. Darn him! When he gets his nose in a book, the house could fall down and he'd never—

[RICHARD appears in the doorway, the book he has been reading in one hand, a finger marking his place. He looks a bit startled still, reluctantly called back to earth from another world. He is sixteen, just out of high school. In appearance he is a perfect blend of father and mother, so much so that each is convinced he is the image of the other. He has his mother's light-brown hair, his father's gray eyes; his features are neither large nor small; he is of medium height, neither fat nor thin. One would not call him a handsome boy; neither is he homely. But he is definitely different from both of his parents, too. There is something of extreme sensitiveness added—a restless, apprehensive, defiant, shy, dreamy, self-conscious intelligence about him. In manner he is alternately plain, simple boy and a posey actor solemnly playing a role. He is dressed in prep. school reflection of the college style of ARTHUR.]

Richard. Did you want me, Pa?

Miller. I'd hoped I'd made that plain. Come and sit down a while.

[He points to chair.]

Richard. [Coming forward—seizing on the opportunity to play up his preoccupation—with apologetic superiority.] I didn't hear you, Pa. I was off in another world.

[MILDRED slyly shoves her foot out so that he trips over it, almost falling. She laughs gleefully. So does ARTHUR.]

Arthur. Good for you, Mid! That'll wake him up!

Richard. [Grins sheepishly—all boy now.] Darn you, Mid! I'll show you!

[He pushes her back on the sofa and tickles her with his free hand, still holding the book in the other. She shrieks.]

Arthur. Give it to her, Dick!

Miller. That's enough now. No more roughhouse. You sit down here, Richard. [RICHARD obediently sits in chair.] What were you planning to do with yourself today? Going out to the beach with Mildred?

Richard. [Scornfully superior.] That silly party! I should say not!

Mildred. He's not coming because Muriel isn't. I'll bet he's got a date with her somewhere.

Richard. [Flushing bashfully.] You shut up, Mid! [Then to his FATHER.] I thought I'd just stay home, Pa—this morning, anyway.

Miller. Help Tommy set off firecrackers, eh?

Richard. [Drawing himself up—with dignity.] I should say not. [Then frowning portentously.] I don't believe in this silly celebrating the Fourth of July—all this lying talk about liberty—when there is no liberty!

Miller. [A twinkle in his eye.] Hmmmm.

Richard. [Getting warmed up.] The land of the free and the home of the brave! Home of the slave is what they ought to call it—the wage slave ground under the heel of the capitalist class, starving, crying for bread for his children, and all he gets is a stone! The Fourth of July is a stupid farce!

Miller. [Putting a hand to his mouth to conceal a grin.] Hmm. They are mighty strong words. You'd better not repeat such sentiments outside the bosom of the family or they'll have you in jail.

Sid. And throw away the key.

Richard. [Darkly.] Let them put me in jail. But how about the freedom of speech in the Constitution, then? That must be a farce, too. [Then he adds grimly.] No, you can celebrate your Fourth of July. I'll celebrate the day the people bring out the guillotine again and I see Pierpont Morgan being driven by in a tumbrel!

[His FATHER and SID are vastly amused. LILY is shocked but, taking her cue from them, smiles. MILDRED stares at him in puzzled wonderment, never having heard this particular line before. Only ARTHUR betrays the outraged reaction of a patriot.]

Arthur. Aw, say, you fresh kid, tie that bull outside! You ought to get a punch in the nose for talking that way on the Fourth!

Miller. [Solemnly.] Son, if I didn't know it was you talking, I'd think we had Emma Goldman¹ with us.

Arthur. Never mind, Pa. Wait till we get him down to Yale. We'll take that out of him!

Richard. [With high scorn.] Oh, Yale! You think there's nothing in the world besides Yale. After all, what is Yale?

Arthur. You'll find out what!

Sid. [Provocatively.] Don't let them scare you, Dick. Give 'em hell!

Lily. [Shocked.] Sid! You shouldn't swear before—

Richard. What do you think I am, Aunt Lily—a baby? I've heard worse than anything Uncle Sid says.

¹ Russian-born American anarchist (1869–1940), whose sensational speeches advocating birth control, obstruction of the draft, and communism led to her deportation to Russia in 1917.

Mildred. And said worse himself, I bet!

Miller. [*With a comic air of resignation.*] Well, Richard, I've always found I've had to listen to at least one stump speech every Fourth. I only hope getting your extra strong one right after breakfast will let me off for the rest of the day.

[*They ALL laugh now, taking this as a cue.*]

Richard. [*Somberly.*] That's right, laugh! After you, the deluge, you think! But look out! Supposing it comes before? Why shouldn't the workers of the world unite and rise? They have nothing to lose but their chains! [*He recites threateningly.*] "The days grow hot, O Babylon! 'Tis cool beneath thy willow trees!"

Miller. Hmm. But where's the connection, exactly? Something from that book you're reading?

Richard. [*Superior.*] No. That's poetry. This is prose.

Miller. I've heard there was a difference between 'em. What is the book?

Richard. [*Importantly.*] Carlyle's French Revolution.

Miller. Hmm. So that's where you drove the tumbrel from and piled poor old Pierpont in it. [*Then seriously.*] Glad you're reading it, Richard. It's a darn fine book.

Richard. [*With unflattering astonishment.*] What, have you read it?

Miller. Well, you see, even a newspaper owner can't get out of reading a book every now and again.

Richard. [*Abashed.*] I—I didn't mean—I know you— [*Then enthusiastically.*] Say, isn't it a great book, though—that part about Mirabeau—and about Marat and Robespierre—

Mrs. Miller. [*Appears from front parlor in a great state of flushed annoyance.*] Never you mind Robespierre, young man! You tell me this minute where you've hidden those books! They were on the shelf in your wardrobe and now you've gone and hid them somewhere else. You go right up and bring them to your father.

[*RICHARD, for a second, looks suddenly guilty and crushed. Then he bristles defensively.*]

Miller. Never mind his getting them now. We'll waste the whole morning over those darned books. And anyway, he has a right to keep his library to himself. [*Looks from MRS. MILLER.*] That is, if they're not too—What books are they, Richard?

Richard. [*Self-consciously hesitant.*] Well—there's—

Mrs. Miller. I'll tell you if he won't—and you give him a good talking too. [*Then,*

after a glance at RICHARD.] Not that I blame Richard. There must be some boy he knows who's trying to show off as advanced and wicked, and he told him about—

Richard. No! I read about them myself in the papers and other books.

Mrs. Miller. Well, no matter how, there they were on his shelf. Two by that awful Oscar Wilde they put in jail for heaven knows what wickedness.

Arthur. [*Suddenly—solemnly authoritative.*] He committed bigamy. [*Then as SM smothered a burst of ribald laughter.*] What are you laughing at? I guess I ought to know. A fellow at college told me. His father was in England when this Wilde was pinched—and he said he remembered once his mother asked his father about it and he told her he'd committed bigamy.

Miller. [*Hiding a smile behind his hand.*] Well, then, that must be right, Arthur.

Mrs. Miller. I wouldn't put it past him, nor anything else. One book was called the Picture of something or other.

Richard. "The Picture of Dorian Gray." It's one of the greatest novels ever written.

Mrs. Miller. Looked to me like cheap trash. And the second book was poetry. "The Ballad" of I forget what.

Richard. [*Defiantly.*] "The Ballad of Reading Gaol," one of the greatest poems ever written.

[*He pronounces it "Reading Goal"—as in goalpost.*]

Mrs. Miller. All about someone who murdered his wife and got hung, as he richly deserved, as far as I could make out. And then there were two books by that Bernard Shaw—

Richard. The greatest playwright alive today!

Mrs. Miller. To hear him tell it, maybe! You know, Nat, the one who wrote a play—that was so vile they wouldn't even let it play in New York!

Miller. Hmmm. I remember.

Mrs. Miller. One was a book of his plays and the other had a long title I couldn't make head or tail of, only it wasn't a play.

Richard. [*Proudly.*] "The Quintessence of Ibsenism."

Mildred. Phew! Good gracious, what a name! What does it mean, Dick? I'll bet he doesn't know.

Richard. [*Outraged.*] I do, too, know! It's about Ibsen, the greatest playwright since Shakespeare.

Mrs. Miller. And there was a book of plays by that Ibsen there, too! And poems by Swin-something—

Richard. "Poems and Ballads by Swinburne," Ma. The greatest poet since Shelley! He tells the truth about real love!

Mrs. Miller. Love! Well, all I can say is, from reading here and there, that if he wasn't flung in jail along with Wilde, he should have been. Some of the things I simply couldn't read, they were so indecent. All about—well, I can't tell you before Lily and Mildred.

Sid. [*With a wink at RICHARD, jokingly.*] Remember, I'm next on that one, Dick. I feel the need of a little poetical education.

Lily. [*Scandalized, but laughing.*] Sid! aren't you ashamed?

Mrs. Miller. This is no laughing matter. And then there was Kipling's—but I suppose he's not so bad. And last there was a poem—a long one—the Rubay—What is it, Richard?

Richard. "The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam!" That's the best of all!

Miller. Oh, I've read that, Essie—got a copy down at the office now.

Sid. [*Enthusiastically.*] So have I. It's a pippin!

Lily. [*With shy excitement.*] I—I've read it, too—at the library. I like—some parts of it.

Mrs. Miller. [*Scandalized.*] Why, Lily!

Miller. Everybody's reading that now, Essie—and it don't seem to do them any harm. There's fine things in it, seems to me—true things.

Mrs. Miller. [*A bit bewildered and uncertain now.*] Why, Nat, I don't see how you—It looked terrible blasphemous—parts I read.

Sid. Remember this one: [*He quotes rhetorically.*] "Oh Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin Beset the path I was to wander in—" Now, I've always noticed how beset my path was with gin—in the past, you understand!

[*He casts a joking side glance at LILY. The OTHERS laugh. But LILY is in a melancholy dream and hasn't heard him.*]

Mrs. Miller. [*Tartly, but evidently suppressing her usual smile where he is concerned.*] You would pick out the ones with liquor in them!

Lily. [*Suddenly—with a sad pathos, quotes awkwardly and shyly.*] I like—because it's true:

"The Moving Finger writes, and having writ, Moves on; nor all your Piety nor Wit Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line, Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it."

Mrs. Miller. [*Astonished, as are all the*

OTHERS.] Why, Lily, I never knew you to recite poetry before!

Lily. [*Immediately guilty and apologetic.*] I—it just stuck in my memory somehow.

Richard. [*Looking at her as if he had never seen her before.*] Good for you, Aunt Lily! [*Then enthusiastically.*] But that isn't the best. The best is:

"A Book of Verses underneath the Bough, A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou Beside me singing in the Wilderness—"

Arthur. [*Who, bored to death by all this poetry quoting, looks out window down right.*] Hey, look who's coming up the walk—Old Man McComber!

Miller. [*Irritably.*] Dave? Now what in thunder does that damned old—Sid, I can see where we never are going to get to that picnic.

Mrs. Miller. [*Vexatiously.*] He'll know we're in this early, too. No use lying. [*Then appalled by another thought.*] That Norah—she's that thick, she never can answer the front door right unless I tell her each time. Nat, you've got to talk to Dave. I'll have her show him in here. Lily, let's us run up the back stairs and get our things on. Nat, you get rid of him the first second you can! Whatever can the old fool want—

[*She and LILY hurry out.*]

Arthur. I'm going to beat it—just time to catch the eight-twenty trolley.

Mildred. I've got to catch that, too. Wait till I get my hat, Art!

[*She rushes into the back parlor.*]

Arthur. [*Shouts after her.*] I can't wait. You can catch up with me if you hurry. [*He turns at the back-parlor door with a grin.*] Dick! McComber may be coming to see if your intentions toward his daughter are dishonorable! You'd better beat it while your shoes are good!

[*He disappears through back-parlor door, laughing.*]

Richard. [*A bit shaken, but putting on a brave front.*] Think I'm scared of him?

Miller. [*Gazing at him—frowning.*] Can't imagine what—But it's to complain about something, I know that. I only wish I didn't have to be pleasant with the old buzzard—but he's about the most valuable advertiser I've got.

Sid. [*Sympathetically.*] I know. But tell him to go to hell, anyway. He needs that ad more than you.

[*The sound of the bell comes from the rear of the house off right from back parlor.*]

Miller. There he is. You clear out, Dick—but come right back as soon as he's gone, you

hear? I'm not through with you, yet.
Richard. Yes, Pa.

Miller. You better clear out, too, Sid. You know Dave doesn't approve jokes.

Sid. And loves me like poison! Come on, Dick, we'll go out and help Tommy celebrate.

[HE takes RICHARD'S arm and they also disappear through back-parlor door. MILLER glances through the front parlor toward the front door, then calls in a tone of strained heartiness.]

Miller. Hello, Dave. Come right in here. What good wind blows you around on this glorious Fourth? [A flat, brittle voice answers him: "Good morning," and a moment later DAVID MCCOMBER appears. He is a thin, dried-up little man with a head too large for his body perched on a scrawny neck, and a long solemn horse face with deep-set little black eyes, a blunt formless nose and a tiny slit of a mouth. He is about the same age as MILLER but is entirely bald, and looks ten years older. He is dressed with a prim neatness in shiny old black clothes.] Here, sit down and make yourself comfortable. [Taking cigar case from pocket.] Have a cigar?

McComber. [Acidly.] You're forgetting. I never smoke.

Miller. [Forcing a laugh at himself.] That's so. So I was. Well, I'll smoke alone, then.

[He bites off the end of the cigar viciously, as if he wished it were MCCOMBER'S head, and sits down on desk chair; faces MCCOMBER.]

McComber. You asked me what brings me here, so I'll come to the point at once. I regret to say it's something disagreeable—disgraceful would be nearer the truth—and it concerns your son, Richard!

Miller. [Beginning to bristle—but calmly.] Oh, come, now, Dave. I'm sure Richard hasn't—

McComber. [Sharply.] And I'm positive he has. You're not accusing me of being a liar, I hope.

Miller. No one said anything about liar. I only meant you're surely mistaken if you think—

McComber. I'm not mistaken. I have proof of everything in his own handwriting!

Miller. Let's get down to brass tacks. Just what is it you're charging him with?

McComber. With being dissolute and blasphemous—with deliberately attempting to corrupt the morals of my young daughter, Muriel.

Miller. Then I'm afraid I'll have to call you a liar, Dave!

McComber. [Without taking offense—in

the same flat, brittle voice.] I thought you'd get around to that, so I brought the proofs with me. [He takes a wallet from his inside coat pocket, selects five or six slips of paper, and holds them out to MILLER.] My wife discovered them in one of Muriel's bureau drawers, hidden under the underwear. They're all in his handwriting. You can't deny it. Anyway, Muriel's confessed to me he wrote them. You read them and then say I'm a liar. [MILLER has taken the slips and is reading them frowningly. MCCOMBER talks on.] Evidently you've been too busy to take the right care about Richard's bringing up or what he's allowed to read—though I can't see why his mother failed in her duty. But that's your misfortune, and none of my business. But Muriel is my business and I can't and I won't have her innocence exposed to the contamination of a young man whose mind, judging from his choice of reading matter, is as foul—

Miller. [Has finished the last of the slips and is making a tremendous effort to control his temper.] Why, you damned old fool! Can't you see Richard's only a fool kid who's just at the stage when he's out to rebel against all authority, and so he grabs at everything radical to read and wants to pass it on to his elders and his girl and boy friends to show off what a young hellion he is! Why, at heart you'd find Richard is just as innocent and as big a kid as your Muriel is! This stuff doesn't mean anything to me—If you believe this could corrupt Muriel, then you must believe she's easily corrupted! But I'll bet you'd find she knows a lot more about life than you give her credit for—and can guess a stork didn't bring her down your chimney!

McComber. Now you're insulting my daughter.

Miller. I'm not insulting her. I'm giving her credit for ordinary good sense. I'd say the same about my own Mildred, who's the same age.

McComber. I know nothing about your Mildred except that she's known all over as a flirt. [Then more sharply.] Well, I knew you'd prove obstinate, but I certainly never dreamed you'd have the impudence, after reading those papers, to claim your son was innocent of all wrong-doing!

Miller. Just what did you dream I'd do?

McComber. Do what it's your plain duty to do as a citizen to protect other people's children! Take and give him a hiding he'd remember to the last day of his life! You'd ought to do it for his sake, if you had any sense—unless you want him to end up in jail.

Miller. [*His fists clenched, leans toward McComber.*] Dave, I've stood all I can stand from you! You get out! And get out quick, if you don't want a kick in the rear to help you!

McComber. [*Again in his flat, brittle voice, slowly getting to his feet but evincing no particular fear.*] You needn't lose your temper. I'm only demanding you do your duty by your own as I've already done by mine. I'm punishing Muriel. She's not to be allowed out of the house for a month and she's to be in bed every night by eight sharp. And yet she's blameless, compared to that—

Miller. [*Crosses to him—belligerently.*] I said I'd had enough out of you, Dave!

McComber. You needn't lay hands on me. I'm going. But there's one thing more. [*He takes a letter from his wallet.*] Here's a letter from Muriel for your son. [*Hands MILLER the letter.*] It makes clear, I think, how she's come to think about him, now that her eyes have been opened. I hope he heeds what's inside—for his own good and yours—because if I ever catch him hanging about my place again I'll have him arrested! And don't think I'm not going to make you regret the insults you've heaped on me. I'm taking the advertisement for my store out of your paper—and it won't go in again, I tell you, not unless you apologize in writing and promise to punish—

Miller. I'll see you in hell first! As for your damned old ad, take it out and go to hell!

McComber. That's plain bluff. You know how badly you need it. So do I. Well, good day.

[*McCOMBER turns and starts stiffly for the door.*]

Miller. Here! Listen a minute! I'm just going to call *your* bluff and tell you that, whether you want to reconsider your decision or not, I'm going to refuse to print your damned ad after tomorrow! Put that in your pipe and smoke it! Furthermore, I'll start a campaign to encourage outside capital to open a dry-goods store in opposition to you that won't be the public swindle I can prove yours is!

McComber. [*A bit shaken by this threat—but in the same flat tone.*] I'll sue you for libel.

Miller. When I get through, there won't be a person in town will buy a dishrag in your place!

McComber. [*More shaken, his eyes shifting about furtively.*] That's all bluff. You

wouldn't dare— [*Then finally he says uncertainly.*] Well, good day.

[*And exits through front parlor. MILLER stands looking after him. Slowly the anger drains from his face and leaves him looking a bit sick and disgusted. SID appears from back parlor. He is nursing a burn on his right hand, but his face is one broad grin of satisfaction.*]

Sid. I burned my hand with one of Tommy's damned firecrackers and came in to get some vaseline. I was listening to the last of your scrap. Good for you, Nat! You sure gave him hell!

Miller. [*Dully.*] Much good it'll do. He knows it was all talk.

Sid. That's just what he don't know, Nat. The old skinflint has a guilty conscience.

Miller. Well, anyone who knows me knows I wouldn't use my paper for a dirty spiteful trick like that—no matter what he did to me.

Sid. Yes, everyone knows you're an old sucker, Nat, too decent for your own good. But McComber never saw you like this before. I tell you you scared the pants off him.

[*He chuckles.*]

Miller. [*Still dejectedly.*] I don't know what made me let go like that. The hell of skunks like McComber is that after being with them ten minutes you become as big skunks as they are.

Sid. [*Notices the slips of paper in MILLER's hand.*] What's this? Something he brought?

Miller. [*Grimly.*] Samples of the new freedom— [*Gives SID slips of paper. SID reads them.*]—from those books Essie found—that Richard's been passing on to Muriel to educate her. They're what started the rumpus. [*Then frowning.*] I've got to do something about that young anarchist or he'll be getting me, and himself, in a peck of trouble. [*Then, pathetically helpless.*] But what can I do? Putting the curb bit on would make him worse. Then he'd have a harsh tyrant to defy. He'd love that, darn him!

Sid. [*Has been reading the slips, a broad grin on his face. Suddenly he whistles.*] Phew! This is a warm lulu for fair! [*He recites with a joking intensity.*]

"My life is bitter with thy love; thine eyes
Blind me, thy tresses burn me, thy sharp
sighs

Divide my flesh and spirit with soft sound—"

Miller. [*With a grim smile.*] Hmm. I missed that one. That must be Mr. Swinburne's copy. I've never read him, but I've heard something like that was the matter with him.

Sid. Yes, it's labelled Swinburne—"Anactoria." Whatever that is. But wait, watch and listen! The worst is yet to come! [*He recites with added comic intensity.*]
 "That I could drink thy veins as wine, and eat

Thy breasts like honey, that from face to feet
 Thy body were abolished and consumed,
 And in my flesh thy very flesh entombed!"

Miller. [*An irrepressible boyish grin coming to his face.*] Hell and hallelujah! Just picture old Dave digesting that for the first time! Gosh, I'd give a lot to have seen his face! [*Then a trace of shocked reproof showing in his voice.*] But it's no joking matter. That stuff is warm—too damned warm, if you ask me! I don't like this a damned bit, Sid. That's no kind of thing to be sending a decent girl. [*More worriedly.*] I thought he was really stuck on her—as one gets stuck on a decent girl at his age—all moonshine and holding hands and a kiss now and again. But this looks—I wonder if he is hanging around her to see what he can get? [*Angrily.*] By God, if that's true, he deserves that licking McComber says it's my duty to give him! I've got to draw the line somewhere!

Sid. Yes, it won't do to have him getting any decent girl in trouble.

Miller. The only thing I can do is put it up to him straight. [*With pride.*] Richard'll stand up to his guns, no matter what. I've never known him to lie to me.

Sid. [*At a noise from the back parlor, looks that way—in a whisper.*] Then now's your chance. I'll beat it and leave you alone—see if the women folks are ready upstairs. We ought to get started soon—if we're ever going to make that picnic.

[*He is halfway to the entrance to the front parlor as RICHARD enters very evidently nervous about MCCOMBER's call.*]

Richard. [*Adopting a forced, innocent tone.*] How's your hand, Uncle Sid?

Sid. All right, Dick, thanks—only hurts a little.

[*He disappears. MILLER watches his SON frowningly. RICHARD gives him a quick side glance and grows more guiltily self-conscious.*]

Richard. [*Forcing a snicker.*] Gee, Pa, Uncle Sid's a bigger kid than Tommy is. He was throwing firecrackers in the air and catching them on the back of his hand and throwing 'em off again just before they went off—and one came and he wasn't quick enough, and it went off almost on top of—

Miller. Never mind that. I've got some-

thing else to talk to you about besides firecrackers.

Richard. [*Apprehensively.*] What, Pa?

Miller. [*Suddenly puts both hands on his shoulders and looks into his eyes—quietly.*] Look here, son. I'm going to ask you a question, and I want an honest answer. I warn you beforehand if the answer is "yes" I'm going to punish you and punish you hard because you'll have done something no boy of mine ought to do. But you've never lied to me before, I know, and I don't believe, even to save yourself punishment, you'd lie to me now, would you?

Richard. [*Impressed—with dignity.*] I won't lie, Pa.

Miller. Have you been trying to have something to do with Muriel—something you shouldn't—you know what I mean.

Richard. [*Stares at him for a moment, as if he couldn't comprehend—then, as he does, a look of righteous indignation comes over his face.*] No! What do you think I am, Pa? I never would! She's not that kind. Why I—I love her! I'm going to marry her—after I get out of college! She's said she would! We're engaged!

Miller. [*A great relief showing in his face.*] All right. That's all I want to know. We won't talk any more about it. [*He gives him an approving pat on the back.*]

Richard. I don't see how you could think—Did that old idiot McComber say that about me?

Miller. [*Joking now.*] Shouldn't call your future father-in-law names, should you? 'Tain't respectful. [*Then after a glance at RICHARD's indignant face—he points to the slips of paper on the desk.*] Well, you can't exactly blame old Dave, can you, when you read through that literature you wished on his innocent daughter?

Richard. [*Sees the slips for the first time and is overcome by embarrassment, which he immediately tries to cover up with a superior, airy carelessness.*] Oh, so that's why. He found those, did he? I told her to be careful—Well, it'll do him good to read the truth about life for once and get rid of his old-fogey ideas.

Miller. I'm afraid I've got to agree with him, though, that they're hardly fit reading for a young girl. [*Then with subtle flattery.*] They're all well enough, in their way, for you who're a man—but—Think it over, and see if you don't agree with me.

Richard. [*Embarrassedly.*] Aw, I only did it because I liked them—and I wanted her to face life as it is. She's so darned

afraid of life—afraid of her Old Man—afraid of people saying this or that about her—afraid of being in love—afraid of everything. She's even afraid to let me kiss her. I thought, maybe, reading those things—they're beautiful, aren't they, Pa? I thought they would give her the spunk to lead her own life, and not be—always thinking of being afraid.

Miller. I see. Well, I'm afraid she's still afraid. *[Takes the letter from the table.]* Here's a letter from her he said to give you. *[RICHARD takes the letter from him uncertainly, his expression changing to one of apprehension. MILLER adds with a kindly smile.]* You better be prepared for a bit of a blow. But never mind, son. There's lots of other fish in the sea. *[RICHARD is not listening to him, but staring at the letter with a sort of fascinated dread. MILLER looks into his SON's face a second, then turns away, troubled and embarrassed.]* Darn it! I better go upstairs and get rigged out or I never will get to that picnic.

[He moves awkwardly and self-consciously off. RICHARD continues to stare at the letter for a moment—then girds up his courage and tears it open and begins to read swiftly. As he reads his face grows more and more wounded and tragic, until at the end his mouth draws down at the corners, as if he were about to break into tears. With an effort he forces them back and his face grows flushed with humiliation and wronged anger.]

Richard. *[Blurts out to himself.]* The little coward! I hate her! She can't treat me like that! I'll show her!

[At sound of voices from off, RICHARD quickly shoves the letter into the inside pocket of his coat and does his best to appear calm and indifferent, even attempting to whistle "Waiting at the Church." But the whistle peters out miserably as his MOTHER, LILY and SID enter. They are dressed in all the elab-

orate paraphernalia of motoring at that period—linen dusters, veils, goggles, SID in a snappy cap.]

Mrs. Miller. Well, we're about ready to start at last, thank goodness! Let's hope no more callers are on the way. What did that McComber want, Richard, do you know? Sid couldn't tell us.

Richard. You can search me. Ask Pa.

Mrs. Miller. *[Immediately sensing something "down" in his manner—going to him worriedly.]* Why, whatever's the matter with you, Richard? You sound as if you'd lost your last friend! What is it?

Richard. *[Desperately.]* I—I don't feel so well—my stomach's sick.

Mrs. Miller. *[Immediately all sympathy, smoothing his hair back from his forehead.]* You poor boy! What a shame—on the Fourth, too, of all days! *[Turning to the OTHERS.]* Maybe I better stay home with him, if he's sick.

Lily. Yes, I'll stay, too. Poor boy!

Richard. *[More desperately.]* No! You go, Ma! I'm not really sick. I'll be all right. You go. I want to be alone! *[Then, as a louder bang comes from in back as TOMMY sets off a cannon cracker, he jumps to his feet.]* Darn Tommy and his darned fire-crackers. You can't get any peace in this house with that darned kid around! Darn the Fourth of July anyway! I wish we still belonged to England!

[He strides off in an indignant fury of misery through the front parlor.]

Mrs. Miller. *[Stares after him worriedly—then sighs philosophically.]* Well, I guess he can't be so very sick—after that. *[She shakes her head.]* He's a queer boy. Sometimes I can't make head or tail of him.

Miller. *[Calls from the front door beyond the back parlor.]* Come along, folks. Let's get started.

Sid. We're coming, Nat.

[He and the TWO WOMEN move off through the front parlor.]

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

Dining-room of the Miller home—a little after six in the evening of the same day. The room is much too small for the medium-priced, formidable dining-room set, especially now when all the leaves

of the table are in. At right, toward rear, is a double doorway with sliding doors and portieres leading into the back parlor. In the rear wall, right center, is the door to the pantry. At the left of

door is the china closet with its display of the family cut glass and fancy china. In the left wall are two windows looking out on a side lawn. In front of the windows is a heavy, ugly side-board with three pieces of old silver on its top. In the right wall, down stage, is a screen door opening on a side porch. A dark rug covers most of the floor. The table, with a chair at each end, left and right, three chairs on the far side, facing front, and two on the near side, their backs to front, takes up most of the available space. The walls are papered in a sombre brown and dark-red design.

[MRS. MILLER is supervising and helping the Second Girl, NORAH, in the setting of the table. NORAH is a clumsy, heavy-handed, heavy-footed, long-jawed, beamingly good-natured young Irish girl—a "greenhorn."]

Mrs. Miller. I really think you better put on the lights, Norah. It's getting so cloudy out, and this pesky room is so dark anyway.

Norah. Yes, Mum. [She stretches awkwardly over the table to reach the chandelier that is suspended from the middle of the ceiling and manages to turn one light on—scornfully.] Arrah, the contraption!

Mrs. Miller. [Worriedly.] Careful!

Norah. [Cheerfully.] Careful as can be, Mum.

[But in drawing back to move around to reach the next bulb she knocks against the table.]

Mrs. Miller. There! I do wish you'd watch—!

Norah. [A flustered appeal in her voice.] Arrah, what have I done wrong now?

Mrs. Miller. [Draws a deep breath—then sighs helplessly.] Oh, nothing. Never mind the rest of the lights. You might as well go out in the kitchen and wait until I ring.

Norah. [Relieved and cheerful again.] Yes, Mum. [She starts for the pantry.]

Mrs. Miller. But there's one thing—no, two other things—things I've told you over and over. Don't pass the plates on the wrong side at dinner tonight, and do be careful not to let that pantry door slam behind you.

Norah. Yes, Mum.

[She goes into the pantry and lets the door almost slam behind her, but catches it in time to prevent the slam. She grins a pleased smile at MRS. MILLER as she allows the door to close quietly. MRS. MILLER sighs and reaches up with

difficulty; can't reach lights. As she is doing so, LILY enters.]

Lily. Here, let me do that, Essie. I'm taller. [She quickly turns on lights.]

Mrs. Miller. [Gratefully.] Thank you, Lily.

Lily. But where's Norah? Why didn't she—?

Mrs. Miller. [Exasperatedly.] Oh, that girl! She'll be the death of me! She's that thick, you honestly wouldn't believe it possible.

Lily. Is there anything I can do, Essie?

Mrs. Miller. She's got the table all wrong. We'll have to reset it. But you're always helping me. It isn't fair to ask you—in your vacation. You need your rest after teaching a pack of wild Indian kids all year.

Lily. [Beginning to help with the table.] You know I love to help. It makes me feel I'm some use in this house instead of just sponging—

Mrs. Miller. [Indignantly.] Sponging! You pay, don't you?

Lily. Almost nothing. And you and Nat only take that little to make me feel better about living with you. [Forcing a smile.] I don't see how you stand me—having a cranky old maid around all the time.

Mrs. Miller. What nonsense you talk! As if Nat and I—weren't only too tickled to death to have you! Lily Miller, I've no patience with you when you go on like that. [Then she changes the subject abruptly.] What time's it getting to be?

Lily. [Glances at her watch.] Quarter past six.

Mrs. Miller. I do hope those men folks aren't going to be late for dinner— [She sighs.] But I suppose with that darned Sachem Club picnic it's more likely than not. [Lily looks sad and worried, and sighs. MRS. MILLER gives her a quick side glance.] I see you've got your new dress on.

Lily. [Embarrassedly.] Yes, I thought— if Sid's taking me to the fireworks—I ought to spruce up a little.

Mrs. Miller. [Looking away.] Hmm. [A pause. Then she says with an effort to be casual.] You mustn't mind if Sid comes home feeling a bit—gay. I expect Nat to and we'll have to listen to all those old stories about when he was a boy. You know what those picnics are, and he'd be running into all his old friends.

Lily. [Agitatedly.] I don't think he will —this time—not after his promise.

Mrs. Miller. [Avoiding looking at her.] I know. But men are weak. [Then quickly.] That was a good notion of Nat's, getting Sid

the job on the *Waterbury Standard*. All Sid's ever needed was to get away from the rut he was in here. He's the kind that's the victim of his friends. [*Lily keeps silent, her eyes downcast. MRS. MILLER goes on meaningly.*] He's making good money in Waterbury, too—thirty-five a week. He's in a better position to get married than he ever was.

Lily. [*Stiffly.*] Well, I hope he finds a woman who's willing—though after he's through with his betting on horse races, and dice, and playing Kelly pool, there won't be much left for a wife—even if there was nothing else he spent his money on.

Mrs. Miller. Oh, he'd give up all that—for the right woman. [*Suddenly she comes directly to the point.*] Lily, why don't you change your mind and marry Sid and reform him? You love him and always have—

Lily. [*Stiffly.*] I can't love a man who drinks.

Mrs. Miller. You can't fool me. I know darned well you love him. And he loves you and always has.

Lily. Never enough to stop drinking for. [*Cutting off MRS. MILLER's reply.*] No, it's no good in your talking, Essie. We've been over this a thousand times before and I'll always feel the same as long as Sid's the same. If he gave me proof he'd—but even then I don't believe I could. It's sixteen years since I broke off our engagement, but what made me break it off is as clear to me today as it was then—his taking up with bad women—

Mrs. Miller. [*Protests half-heartedly.*] But he's always sworn he got raked into that party and never had anything to do with those harlots.

Lily. Well, I don't believe him—didn't then and don't now. I don't believe he deliberately planned to, but— Oh, it's no good talking, Essie. What's done is done. But you know how much I like Sid—in spite of everything. I know he was just born to be what he is—irresponsible. But don't talk to me about marrying him—because I never could.

Mrs. Miller. [*Angrily.*] He's a dumb fool. —a stupid dumb fool, that's what he is!

Lily. [*Quietly.*] No. He's just Sid.

Mrs. Miller. It's a shame for you—a measly shame—you that would have made such a wonderful wife for any man—that ought to have your own home and children!

Lily. [*Winces but puts her arm around her affectionately—gently.*] Now don't you go feeling sorry for me. I won't have that. Here I am, thanks to your and Nat's kind-

ness, with the best home in the world; and as for the children, I feel the same love for yours as if they were mine, and I didn't have the pain of bearing them. And then there are all the boys and girls I teach every year. I like to feel I'm a sort of second mother to them and helping them to grow up to be good men and women. So I don't feel such a useless old maid, after all.

Mrs. Miller. [*Kisses her impulsively—her voice husky.*] You're a good woman, Lily—too good for the rest of us. [*She turns away, wiping a tear furtively—then abruptly changing the subject.*] Good gracious, if I'm not forgetting one of the most important things! I've got to warn that Tommy not to give me away to Nat about the fish. He knows, because I had to send him to market for it, and he's liable to burst out laughing—

Lily. About what?

Mrs. Miller. [*Guiltily.*] Well, I've never told you, but you know how Nat carries on about not being able to eat bluefish.

Lily. I know he says it poisons him.

Mrs. Miller. [*Chuckling.*] Poisons him, nothing! He's been eating bluefish for years—only I tell him each time it's weakfish. We're having it tonight.

Lily. [*Laughing.*] Aren't you ashamed, Essie?

Mrs. Miller. Not much, I'm not. I like bluefish. [*She laughs.*] Where is Tommy? In the sitting-room?

Lily. No, Richard's there alone. I think Tommy's out on the piazza with Mildred. [*MRS. MILLER bustles out. As soon as she is gone, the smile fades from LILY's lips. Her face grows sad and she again glances nervously at her watch. RICHARD appears from the back parlor, moving aimlessly. His face wears a set expression of bitter gloom; he exudes tragedy. For RICHARD, after his first outburst of grief and humiliation, has begun to take a masochistic satisfaction in his great sorrow, especially in the concern which it arouses in the family circle. On seeing his AUNT, he gives her a dark look and turns and is about to stalk back toward the sitting room when she speaks to him pityingly.*] Feel any better, Richard?

Richard. [*Somberly.*] I'm all right, Aunt Lily. You mustn't worry about me.

Lily. [*Going to him.*] But I do worry about you. I hate to see you so upset.

Richard. It doesn't matter. Nothing matters.

Lily. [*Puts her arm around him sympathetically.*] You really mustn't let yourself

take it so seriously. You know, things like that come up, and we think there's no hope—

Richard. Things like what come up?

Lily. What's happened between you and Muriel.

Richard. [*With disdain.*] Oh, her! I wasn't even thinking about her. [*Impressively.*] I was thinking about life.

Lily. But then—if we really, really love—why, then something else is bound to happen soon that changes everything again, and it's all as it was before the misunderstanding, and everything works out all right in the end. That's the way it is with life.

Richard. [*With a tragic sneer.*] Life! Life is a joke! And everything works out all wrong in the end.

Lily. [*A little shocked.*] You mustn't talk that way. But I know you don't mean it.

Richard. I do too mean it! You can have your silly optimism, if you like, Aunt Lily. But don't ask me to be so blind. I'm a pessimist! [*Then with an air of cruel cynicism.*] As for Muriel, that's all dead and past. I was only kidding her, anyway, just to have a little fun, and she took it seriously, like a fool. [*Pauses. He forces a cruel smile to his lips.*] You know what they say about women and trolley cars, Aunt Lily: There's always another one along in a minute.

Lily. [*Really shocked this time.*] I don't like you when you say such horrible, cynical things. It isn't nice.

Richard. Nice! That's all you women think of! I'm proud to be a cynic. It's the only thing you can be when you really face life. I suppose you think I ought to be heart-broken about Muriel—a little coward that's afraid to say her soul's her own, and keeps tied to her father's apron strings! Well, not for mine! There's plenty of other fish in the sea!

[*As he is finishing, MRS. MILLER comes back.*]

Mrs. Miller. Why, hello. You here, Richard? Getting hungry, I suppose?

Richard. [*Indignantly.*] I'm not hungry a bit! That's all you think of, Ma—food!

Mrs. Miller. Well, I must say I've never noticed you to hang back at meal times. [*To LILY.*] What's that he was saying about fish in the sea?

LILY. [*Smiling.*] He says he's through with Muriel now.

Mrs. Miller. [*Tartly—giving her SON a rebuking look.*] She's through with him, he means! The idea of your sending a nice girl like her things out of those indecent books!

[*Deeply offended, RICHARD disdains to reply but stalks woundedly to the screen door at right front and puts a hand on the knob.*] Where are you going?

Richard. [*Quotes from "Candida" in a hollow voice.*] "Out, then, into the night with me!"

[*He stalks out, slamming the door behind him.*]

Mrs. Miller. [*Calls.*] Well, don't you go far, 'cause dinner'll be ready in a minute, and I'm not coming running after you! [*She turns to LILY with a chuckle.*] Goodness, that boy! He ought to be on the stage! [*She mimics.*] "Out—into the night"—and it isn't even dark yet! He got that out of one of those books, I suppose. Do you know, I'm actually grateful to old Dave McComber for putting an end to his nonsense with Muriel. I never did approve of Richard getting so interested in girls. He's not old enough for such silliness. Why, seems to me it was only yesterday he was still a baby. [*She sighs, then matter-of-factly.*] Well, nothing to do now till those men turn up. We might as well go in the sitting room and be comfortable.

Lily. [*The nervous, worried note in her voice again.*] Yes, we might as well.

[*They go out. They have no sooner disappeared than the screen door is opened cautiously and RICHARD comes back in the room.*]

Richard. [*Stands inside the door, looking after them—quotes bitterly.*] "They do not know the secret in the poet's heart." [*He comes nearer the table and surveys it, especially the cut-glass dish containing olives, with contempt and mutters disdainfully.*]

Food!

[*But the dish of olives seems to fascinate him and presently he has approached nearer, and stealthily lifts a couple and crams them into his mouth. He is just reaching out for more when the pantry door is opened slightly and NORAH peers in.*]

Norah. Master Dick, you thief, lave them olives alone, or the missus'll be swearing it was me at them!

Richard. [*Draws back his hand as if he had been stung—too flustered to be anything but guilty boy for a second.*] I—I wasn't eating—

Norah. Oho, no, of course not, divil fear you, you was only feeling their pulse! [*Then warningly.*] Mind what I'm saying now, or I'll have to tell on you to protect me good name!

[*She draws back into the pantry, closing the door. RICHARD stands a prey to feelings of bitterest humiliation and seething revolt against everyone and everything. A low whistle comes from just outside the porch door. He starts. Then a masculine voice calls, "Hey, Dick." He goes over to the screen door grumpily. Then as he recognizes the owner of the voice, his own as he answers becomes respectful and admiring.*]

Richard. Oh, hello, Wint. Come on in.

[*He opens the door and WINT SELBY enters and stands just inside the door. WINT is nineteen, a classmate of ARTHUR's at Yale. He is a typical, good-looking college boy of the period, not the athletic but the hell-raising sport type. He is tall, blond, dressed in extreme collegiate cut.*]

Wint. [*As he enters—warningly, in a low tone.*] Keep it quiet, kid. I don't want the folks to know I'm here. Tell Art I want to see him a second—on the Q.T.

Richard. Can't. He's up at the Rands'—won't be home before ten, anyway.

Wint. [*Irritably.*] Damn, I thought he'd be here for dinner. [*More irritably.*] Well, that gums the works for fair!

Richard. [*Ingratiatingly.*] What is it, Wint? Can't I help?

Wint. [*Gives him an appraising glance.*] I might tell you, if you can keep your face shut.

Richard. I can.

Wint. Well, I ran into a couple of swift babies from New Haven this afternoon and I dated them up for tonight, thinking I could catch Art—— But now it's too late to get anyone else and I'll have to pass it up. I'm nearly broke and I can't afford to blow them both to drinks.

Richard. [*With shy eagerness.*] I've got eleven dollars saved up. I could loan you some.

Wint. [*Surveys him appreciatively.*] Say, you're a good sport. [*Then shaking his head.*] Nix, Kid, I don't want to borrow your money. [*Then getting an idea.*] But say, have you got anything on for tonight?

Richard. [*Hesitates a moment—then determinedly.*] No.

Wint. Want to come along with me? [*Then quickly.*] I'm not trying to lead you astray, understand, but it'll be a help if you would just sit around with Belle and feed her a few drinks while I'm off with Edith. [*He winks.*] See what I mean? You don't have to

do anything, not even take a glass of beer—unless you want to.

Richard. [*Boastfully.*] Aw, what do you think I am—a rube?

Wint. You mean you're game for anything that's doing?

Richard. Sure I am!

Wint. Ever been out with any girls—I mean—real swift ones that there's something doing with, not these dead Janes around here?

Richard. [*Lies boldly.*] Aw, what do you think? Sure I have!

Wint. Ever drink anything besides sodas?

Richard. Sure. Lots of times. Beer and sloe-gin fizz and—Manhattans.

Wint. [*Impressed.*] Hell, you know more than I thought. [*Then considering.*] Can you fix it so your folks won't get wise? You can get back by half-past ten or eleven, though, all right. Think you can cook up some lie to cover that? [*As RICHARD hesitates—encouraging him.*] Ought to be easy—on the Fourth.

Richard. Sure. Don't worry about that.

Wint. But you've got to keep your face closed about this, you hear? I tell you straight, I wouldn't ask you to come if I wasn't in a hole—and if I didn't know you were coming down to Yale next year, and didn't think you're giving me the straight goods about having been around before. I don't want to lead you astray.

Richard. [*Scornfully.*] Aw, I told you that was silly.

Wint. Well, you be at the Pleasant Beach House at half-past nine, then—— Come in the back room. And don't forget to grab some clothes to take the booze off your breath.

Richard. Aw, I know what to do.

Wint. See you later, then. [*He starts out and is just about to close the door when he thinks of something.*] And say, I'll say you're a Harvard freshman, and you back me up. They don't know a damn thing about Harvard. I don't want them thinking I'm travelling around with any high-school kid.

Richard. Sure. That's easy.

Wint. So long, then. You better beat it right after your dinner while you've got a chance—and hang around until it's time. Watch your step, kid.

Richard. So long. [*The door closes behind WINT. RICHARD stands for a moment, a look of bitter, defiant rebellion coming over his face, and mutters to himself.*] I'll show her she can't treat me the way she's done! I'll show them all!

Tommy. [*A moment later, rushes in.*] Where's Ma?

Richard. [*Surlily.*] In the sitting-room. Where do you think, Bonehead?

Tommy. Pa and Uncle Sid are coming. Mid and I saw them from the front piazza. Gee, I'm glad. I'm awful hungry, ain't you? Ma! They're coming! Let's have dinner quick! [*A moment later, Mrs. MILLER appears.*] Gee, but I'm awful hungry, Ma!

Mrs. Miller. I know. You always are. You've got a tapeworm, that's what I think.

Tommy. Have we got lobsters, Ma? Gee, I love lobsters.

Mrs. Miller. Yes, we've got lobsters. And fish. You remember what I told you about that fish. [*He snickers.*] Now—do be quiet, Tommy. [*Then with a teasing smile at RICHARD.*] Well, I'm glad to see you've got back out of the night, Richard. [*He scowls and turns his back on her.* LILY appears, nervous and apprehensive. As she does so, from the front yard SID's voice is heard singing a bit maudlinly: "I nearly died with aggravation. Then she shook her head, looked at me and said: 'Poor John! Poor John!'" MRS. MILLER shakes her head forebodingly—but, so great is the comic spell for her, even in her brother's voice, a humorous smile hovers at the corners of her lips.] Mmm! Mmm! Lily, I'm afraid—

Lily. [*Bitterly.*] Yes, I might have known!

Mildred. [*Runs in. She is laughing to herself a bit shamefacedly. She rushes to her MOTHER.*] Ma, Uncle Sid's—

[*She whispers in her ear.*]

Mrs. Miller. Never mind! You shouldn't notice such things—at your age! And don't you encourage him by laughing at his foolishness, do you hear?

Tommy. You needn't whisper, Mid. Think I don't know? Uncle Sid's soused again.

Mrs. Miller. [*Shakes him by the arm indignantly.*] You be quiet! Did I ever! You're getting too smart! [*Gives him a push.*] Sit right down and not another word out of you!

Tommy. [*Aggrieved—rubbing his arm as he goes to his place.*] Aw, Ma!

Mrs. Miller. Richard, you take your right place, and Mildred, sit down. You better, too, Lily. We'll get him right in here and get some food in him. He'll be all right then. [*RICHARD, preserving the pose of the bitter, disillusioned pessimist, sits down in his place in the chair at left of the two whose backs face front. MILDRED takes the other chair facing back, at his right. TOMMY has al-*

ready slid into the end chair at left of those at the rear of table facing front. LILY sits in the one of those at right, by the head of the table, leaving the middle one, SID's, vacant. While they are doing this, the front screen door is heard slamming and MILLER's and SID's laughing voices, raised as they come in and for a moment after, then suddenly cautiously lowered. Mrs. MILLER goes to the entrance and calls peremptorily.] You come right in here! Don't stop to wash up or anything. Dinner's coming right on the table.

Miller's Voice. [*Jovially.*] All right, Essie. Here we are! Here we are!

Mrs. Miller. [*Goes to pantry door, opens it and calls.*] All right, Norah. You can bring in the soup.

Miller. [*Enters. He isn't drunk by any means. He is just mellow and benignly ripened. His face is one large, smiling, happy beam of utter appreciation of life. All's right with the world, so satisfyingly right that he becomes sentimentally moved even to think of it.*] Here we are, Essie! Right on the dot! Here we are!

[*He pulls her to him and gives her a smacking kiss on the ear as she jerks her head away. MILDRED and TOMMY giggle. RICHARD holds rigidly aloof and disdainful, his brooding gaze fixed on his plate. LILY sits stiff and severe.*]

Mrs. Miller. [*Pulling away—embarrassedly, almost blushing.*] Don't, you crazy! [*Then recovering herself—tartly.*] So I see, you're here! And if I didn't, you've told me four times already!

Miller. [*Beamingly.*] Now, Essie, don't be critical. Don't be carpingly critical. Good news can stand repeating, can't it? 'Course it can!

[*He slaps her jovially on her fat buttocks. TOMMY and MILDRED roar with glee. And NORAH, who has just entered from the pantry with a large tureen of soup in her hands, almost drops it as she explodes in a merry guffaw.*]

Mrs. Miller. [*Scandalized.*] Nat! Aren't you ashamed?

Miller. Couldn't resist it! Just simply couldn't resist it!

[*NORAH, still standing with the soup tureen held out stiffly in front of her, again guffaws.*]

Mrs. Miller. [*Turns on her with outraged indignation.*] Norah! Bring that soup here this minute!

Norah. [*Guiltily.*] Yes, Mum.

[*She brings the soup above table to Mrs. MILLER.*]

Miller. [*Jovially.*] Why, hello, Norah!

Mrs. Miller. Nat!

Norah. [*Rebuking him familiarly.*] Arrah now, don't be making me laugh and getting me into trouble!

Mrs. Miller. Norah!

Norah. [*A bit resentfully.*] Yes, Mum. Here I am.

[NORAH puts soup tureen down with a thud in front of MRS. MILLER and then passes around to rear of table, squeezing with difficulty between the china closet and the backs of chairs at the rear of table.]

Mrs. Miller. Tommy! Stop spinning your napkin ring! How often have I got to tell you? Mildred! Sit up straight in your chair! Do you want to grow up a humpback? Richard! Take your elbows off the table.

Miller. [*Coming to his place at the head of the table, rubbing his hands together genially.*] Well, well, well. Well, well, well. It's good to be home again.

[NORAH exits and lets the door slam with a bang behind her.]

Mrs. Miller. [*Jumps.*] Oh! [*Then exasperatedly.*] Nat, I do wish you wouldn't encourage that stupid girl by talking to her, when I'm doing my best to train—

Miller. [*Beamingly.*] All right, Essie. Your word is law! [*Then laughing.*] We did have the darndest fun today! And Sid was the life of that picnic! You ought to have heard him!

Mrs. Miller. [*As NORAH comes back with a dish of saltines—begins ladling soup into the stack of plates before her. She calls.*] Sid! You come right in here! [*Then to NORAH, handing her a soup plate.*] Here, Norah. [*NORAH begins passing soup.*] Sit down, Nat, for goodness sakes. Start eating, everybody. Don't wait for me. You know I've given up soup.

Miller. [*Sits but bends forward to call to his WIFE in a hoarse, confidential tone.*] Essie—Sid's sort of embarrassed about coming—I mean, I'm afraid he's a little bit—not too much, you understand—but he met such a lot of friends and—well, you know. Don't pretend to notice, eh? And don't you kids, you hear! And don't you, Lily. He's scared of you. [*NORAH leaves.*]

Lily. [*With stiff meekness.*] Very well, Nat.

Miller. [*All beaming again—calls.*] All right, Sid. The coast's clear. [*He begins to absorb his soup ravenously.*] Good soup, Essie! Good soup!

Sid. [*A moment later, makes his entrance. He is in a condition that can best be*

described as blurry. He is not staggering but his movements have a hazy uncertainty about them. His shiny fat face is one broad, blurred, Puckish, naughty-boy grin; his eyes have a blurred, wondering vagueness. As he enters, he makes a solemnly intense effort to appear casual and dead, cold sober. He waves his hand aimlessly and says with a silly gravity.] Good evening. [*They ALL answer "Good evening," their eyes on their plates. He makes his way vaguely toward his place, continuing his grave effort at conversation.*] Beautiful evening. I never remember seeing—more beautiful sunset. [*He bumps vaguely into LILY's chair as he attempts to pass behind her—immediately he is all grave politeness.*] Sorry—sorry, Lily—deeply sorry—

Lily. [*Her eyes on her plate—stiffly.*] It's all right.

Sid. [*Manages to get into his chair at last—mutters to himself.*] Wha' was I sayin'? Oh, sunsets. But why butt in? Hasn't sun—perfect right to set? Mind y'r own business. [*He pauses thoughtfully, considering this—then looks around from face to face, fixing each with a vague, blurred, wondering look, as if some deep puzzle were confronting him. Then suddenly he grins mistily and nods with satisfaction.*] And there you are! Am I right?

Miller. [*Humoring him.*] Right.

Sid. Right! [*He is silent, studying his soup plate as if it were some strange enigma. Finally he looks up and regards his SISTER and asks with wondering amazement.*] Soup?

Mrs. Miller. Of course it's soup. What did you think it was? And you hurry up and eat it.

Sid. [*Again regards his soup with astonishment.*] Well! [*Then suddenly.*] Well, all right then! Soup be it! [*EVERYONE is relieved when SID starts to eat. He picks up his spoon and begins to eat, but after two tries in which he finds it difficult to locate his mouth, he addresses the spoon plaintively.*] Spoon, is this any way to treat a pal? [*Then suddenly comically angry, putting the spoon down with a bang.*] Down with spoons! [*He declaims.*] "We'll drink to the dead already, and hurrah for the next who dies." [*Bowing solemnly to right and left.*] Your good health, ladies and gents.

[*Lifts his soup plate and starts drinking the soup. MILLER guffaws, and MILDRED and TOMMY explode with laughter. Even RICHARD forgets his melancholy and snickers, and MRS. MILLER conceals a smile. Only LILY remains stiff and silent.*]

Mrs. Miller. *[With forced severity.]* Sid! Sid. *[Peers at her muzzily, lowering the soup plate a little from his lips.]* Eh?

Mrs. Miller. Oh, nothing. Never mind.

Sid. *[Solemnly offended.]* Are you publicly rebuking me before assembled—? Isn't soup liquid? Aren't liquids drunk? What if they are drunk? It's a good man's failing. *[Speaks to TOMMY.]* Am I right or wrong, Tommy?

Mrs. Miller. Hurry up and finish your soup, and stop talking nonsense!

Sid. *[Turning to her—again offendedly.]* Oh, no, Essie, if I ever so far forget myself as to drink a leg of lamb, then you might have some—excuse for—Just think of wasted effort eating soup with spoons—fifty grueling lifts per plate—billions of soup-eaters on globe—why, it's simply staggering—*[Then darkly to himself.]* No more spoons for me! If I want to develop my biceps, I'll buy Sandow Exerciser! *[He drinks the rest of his soup in a gulp and beams around at the company, suddenly all happiness again.]* Am I right, Nat?

Miller. *[Who has been choking with laughter.]* Haw, haw! You're right, Sid.

Sid. *[Peers at him blurredly and shakes his head sadly.]* Poor old Nat! Always wrong—and drunk again, I regret to note. Sister, my heart bleeds for you and your poor fatherless chicks!

Mrs. Miller. *[Restraining a giggle—severely.]* Sid! Do shut up for a minute! Pass me your soup plates, everybody. If we wait for that girl to take them, we'll be here all night.

[All pass up their plates, which MRS. MILLER stacks up and then puts on the sideboard. As she is doing this, NORAH appears with a platter of broiled fish. She is just about to place these before MILLER when SID catches her eye mistily and rises to his feet.]

Sid. *[Raptly.]* Ah, Sight for Sore eyes, my beautiful Macushla.

Mrs. Miller. Sid!

Norah. *[Immensely pleased—gives him an arch, flirtatious glance.]* Ah, sure, Mister Sid, it's you that have kissed the Blarney Stone, when you've a drop taken!

Sid. My star-eyed Mavourneen!

Mrs. Miller. *[Outraged.]* Norah! Put down that fish!

Norah. *[Flusteredly.]* Yes, Mum.

[She attempts to put the fish down hastily before MILLER, but her eyes are fixed nervously on MRS. MILLER and she gives MILLER a nasty swipe on the side of the head with the edge of the dish.]

Miller. Ouch!

[The CHILDREN, even RICHARD, explode into laughter.]

Norah. *[Almost lets the dish fall.]* Oh, glory be to God! Is it hurted you are?

Miller. *[Rubbing his head, good-naturedly.]* No, no harm done. Only careful, Norah, careful.

Norah. *[Gratefully.]* Yes, sorr.

[She thumps down the dish in front of him with a sigh of relief.]

Sid. *[Who is still standing—with drunken gravity.]* Careful, Mavourneen, careful! You might have hit him some place besides the head. Always aim at his head, remember—so as not to worry us.

[Again the CHILDREN explode. Also NORAH. Even LILY suddenly lets out an hysterical giggle and is furious with herself for doing so.]

Lily. I'm sorry, Nat. I didn't mean to laugh. *[Turning on SID, furiously.]* Will you please sit down and stop making a fool of yourself!

[SID gives her a hurt, mournful look and then sinks meekly down on his chair.]

Norah. *[Grinning cheerfully, gives LILY a reassuring pat on the back.]* Ah, Miss Lily, don't mind him. He's only under the influence. Sure, there's no harm in him at all!

Mrs. Miller. Norah!

[NORAH exits hastily letting the door slam with a crash behind her. There is silence for a moment as MILLER serves the fish and it is passed around. NORAH comes back with the vegetables. Again the door slams behind her as she goes out.]

Miller. *[Is about to take his first bite—stops suddenly and asks his WIFE.]* This isn't, by any chance, bluefish, is it, my dear?

Mrs. Miller. *[With a warning glance at TOMMY.]* Of course not. It's weakfish. You know we never have bluefish, on account of you—

Miller. *[Addressing the table now with the gravity of a man confessing his strange peculiarities.]* Yes, I regret to say, there's a certain peculiar oil in bluefish that invariably poisons me. *[At this, TOMMY cannot stand it any more but explodes into laughter. MRS. MILLER, after a helpless glance at him, follows suit; then LILY goes off into uncontrollable, hysterical laughter, and RICHARD and MILDRED are caught in the contagion. MILLER looks around at them with a weak smile, his dignity now ruffled a bit.]* Well, I must say I don't see what's so darned funny about my being poisoned.

Sid. *[Peers around him—then with*

drunken cunning.] Aha! Nat, I suspect—plot! This fish looks blue to me—very blue—in fact despondent, desperate, and—*[He points his fork dramatically at MRS. MILLER, who starts to chuckle and then laughs.]* Look how guilty she looks—a veritable Lucretia Borgia! Can it be this woman has been slowly poisoning you all these years? And how well—you've stood it! What iron constitution! Even now, when you are invariably at death's door, I can't believe—

[EVERYONE goes off into uncontrollable laughter.]

Miller. [Grumpily.] Oh, give us a rest, you darned fool! A joke's a joke, but—*[He addresses his WIFE in a wounded tone.]* Is this true, Essie?

Mrs. Miller. [Wiping the tears from her eyes—defiantly.] Yes, it is true, if you must know, and you'd never have suspected it if it weren't for that darned Tommy, and Sid poking his nose in. You've been eating bluish for years and thrived on it and it's all nonsense about that peculiar oil—

Miller. [Deeply offended.] Kindly allow me to know my own constitution! Now I think of it, I've felt upset afterwards every damned time we've had fish! *[He pushes his plate away from him with proud renunciation.]* I can't eat this.

Mrs. Miller. [Insultingly matter-of-fact.] Well, don't, then. There's lots of lobster coming and you can fill up on that.

[RICHARD suddenly bursts out laughing again.]

Miller. [Turns to him, caustically.] You seem in a merry mood, Richard. Why, I thought you were the original of the Heart Bowed Down today.

Sid. [With mock condolence.] Never mind, Dick. Let them—scoff! What do they know about girls whose hair sizzchels, whose lips are fireworks, whose eyes are red-hot sparks—

Mildred. [Laughing.] Is that what you wrote to Muriel? *[Turning to RICHARD.]* You silly goat, you!

Richard. [Surlily.] Aw, shut up, Mid. What do I care about her? I'll show all of you how much I care!

Mrs. Miller. Pass your plates as soon as you're through, everybody. I've rung for the lobster. And that's all. You don't get any dessert or tea after lobster, you know.

[NORAH appears, bearing a huge platter of cold boiled lobster which she sets before MILLER, and exits.]

Tommy. Gee, I love lobster!

[MILLER puts one on each plate, and they are passed around and EVERYONE

starts in pulling the cracked shells apart.]

Miller. [Determining to give the conversation another turn, says to his DAUGHTER.] Have a good time at the beach, Mildred?

Mildred. Oh, fine, Pa, thanks. The water was wonderful and warm.

Miller. Swim far?

Mildred. Yes, for me. But that isn't so awful far.

Miller. Well, you ought to be a good swimmer, if you take after me. I used to be a regular water rat when I was a boy. I'll have to go down to the beach with you one of these days—though I'd be rusty, not having been in in all these years. *[The reminiscent look comes into his eyes of one about to embark on an oft-told tale of childhood adventure.]* You know, speaking of swimming, I never go down to that beach but what it calls to mind the day I and Red Sisk went in swimming there and I saved his life.

[By this time the FAMILY are beginning to exchange amused, guilty glances. They ALL know what is coming.]

Sid. [With a sly, blurry wink around.] Aha!

Miller. [Turning on him.] What's that?

Sid. Nothing—go on swimming—don't mind me.

Miller. [Glares at him—but immediately is overcome by the reminiscent mood again.] Well—Red Sisk—his father kept a blacksmith shop where the Union Market is now—we kids called him Red because he had the damdest reddest crop of hair—

Sid. [As if he were talking to his plate.] Remarkable!—the curious imagination—of little children.

Mrs. Miller. [As she sees MILLER about to explode—interposes tactfully.] Sid! Eat your lobster and shut up! Go on, Nat.

Miller. [Gives Sid a withering look—then is off again.] Well, as I was saying, Red and I went swimming that day. Must have been—let me see—Red was fourteen, bigger and older than me. I was only twelve—forty-five years ago—Wasn't a single house down there then—but there was a stake out where the whistling buoy is now, about a mile out. *[TOMMY, who has been having difficulty restraining himself, lets out a stifled giggle. MILLER bends a frowning gaze on him.]* One laugh more out of you, young man, and you'll leave the table!

Mrs. Miller. [Quickly interposing, trying to stave off the story.] Do eat your lobster, Nat. You didn't have any fish, you know.

Miller. [Not liking the reminder—pet-

tishly.] Well, if I'm going to be interrupted every second anyway—

[*He turns to his lobster and chews in silence for a moment.*]

Mrs. Miller. [Trying to switch the subject.] How's Anne's mother's rheumatism, Mildred?

Mildred. Oh, she's much better, Ma. She was in wading today. She says salt water's the only thing that really helps her bunion.

Mrs. Miller. Mildred! Where are your manners? At the table's no place to speak of—

Miller. [Fallen into the reminiscent obsession again.] Well, as I was saying, there was I and Red, and he dared me to race him out to the stake and back. Well, I didn't let anyone dare me in those days. I was a spunky kid. So I said "all right" and we started out. We swam and swam and were pretty evenly matched; though, as I've said, he was bigger and older than me, but finally I drew ahead. I was going along easy, with lots in reserve, not a bit tired, when suddenly I heard a sort of gasp from behind me—like this—"help." [*He imitates. EVERYONE'S eyes are firmly fixed on their plates, except SID'S.*] And I turned and there was Red, his face all pinched and white, and he says weakly: "Help, Nat! I got a cramp in my leg!" Well, I don't mind telling you I got mighty scared. Then suddenly I thought of the pile. If I could pull him to that, I could hang on to him till someone'd notice us. But the pile was still—well, I calculate it must have been two hundred feet away.

Sid. Two hundred and fifty!

Miller. [In confusion.] What's that?

Sid. I've taken down the distance every time you've saved Red's life for thirty years and the mean average to that pile is two hundred and fifty feet! [*There is a burst of laughter from around the table. SID continues complainingly.*] Why didn't you let that Red drown, anyway, Nat? I never knew him but I know I'd never have liked him.

Miller. [Really hurt, forces a feeble smile to his lips and pretends to be a good sport about it.] Well, guess you're right, Sid. Guess I have told that one too many times and bored everyone. But it's a good true story for kids because it illustrates the danger of being foolhardy in the water—

Mrs. Miller. [Sensing the hurt in his tone, comes to his rescue.] Of course it's a good story—and you tell it whenever you've a mind to! And you, Sid, if you were in any responsible state, I'd give you a good piece of my mind for teasing Nat like that!

Miller. [With a sad, self-pitying smile at

his WIFE.] Getting old, I guess, Mother—getting to repeat myself. Someone ought to stop me.

Mrs. Miller. No such thing! You're as young as you ever were. [*She turns on SID again angrily.*] You eat your lobster and maybe it'll keep your mouth shut!

Sid. [Irrepressibly.] Lobster! Did you know, Tommy, your Uncle Sid is the man invented lobster? Fact! One day—took a day off and just dashed off lobster. He was biggern' older than me and had the darndest crop of red hair, but I dashed him off just the same! Am I right, Nat?

Mrs. Miller. Mercy sakes! Can't you shut up?

Sid. In this cage you see the lobster. You will not believe me, ladies and gents, but it's a fact that this interesting bivalve only makes love to his mate once in every thousand years—but, dearie me, how he does enjoy it!

[*The CHILDREN roar. LILY and MRS. MILLER laugh in spite of themselves—then look embarrassed. MILLER guffaws—then suddenly grows shocked.*]

Miller. Careful, Sid, careful. Remember you're at home.

Tommy. [Suddenly in a hoarse whisper to his MOTHER, with an awed glance of admiration at his UNCLE.] Ma! Look at him! He's eating that lobster, shells and all!

Mrs. Miller. [Horried.] Sid, do you want to kill yourself? Put that down!

Sid. [With great dignity.] But I prefer the shells. All famous epicures prefer the shells—it's the same with clams. Unless I eat the shells there is a certain, peculiar oil that invariably poisons me! Am I right, Nat?

Miller. [Good-naturedly.] You seem to be getting a lot of fun kidding me. Go ahead, then. I don't mind.

Mrs. Miller. He better go right up to bed for a while, that's what he better do.

Sid. [Considering this owlishly.] Bed? Yes, maybe you're right. [*He gets to his feet.*] I am not at all well—in very delicate condition. We are praying for a boy. Am I right, Nattie? Nat, I kept telling you all day I was in delicate condition and yet you kept forcing demon chowder on me, although you knew full well—even if you were full—that there is a certain peculiar oil in chowder that invariably—

[*They are again ALL laughing—LILY hysterically.*]

Mrs. Miller. Will you get to bed, you idiot!

Sid. [Mutters graciously.] Immediately—if not sooner. [*He passes rear of LILY and*

stops.] But wait. There is still a duty I must perform. No day is complete without it. Lily, answer once and for all, will you marry me?

Lily. [*With an hysterical giggle.*] No, I won't—never!

Sid. [*Nodding his head.*] Right! And perhaps it's all for the best. For how could I forget the pre—hic—precepts taught me at mother's dying knee. "Sidney," she said, "Sidney, my boy! Never marry a woman who drinks! Lips that touch liquor shall never touch yours!" [*Gazing at her mournfully.*] Too bad! So fine a woman once—and now such a slave to rum! [*Turning to NAT.*] What can we do to save her, Nat? [*In a hoarse, confidential whisper.*] Better put her in an institution where she'll be removed from temptation! The mere smell of it seems to drive her frantic!

Mrs. Miller. [*Again struggling with her laughter.*] You leave Lily alone and go to bed!

Sid. Right! Good night, ladies—and gents—we will meet—by and by! [*He gives an imitation of a Salvation Army drum.*] Boom! Boom! Boom! Come and be saved, Brothers! [*He starts to sing the old Army hymn.*] "In the sweet—Boom! Boom! [*He turns and marches solemnly out, singing.*

By and by—Boom! Boom!
We will meet on that beautiful shore. Boom!
Boom!

Work and pray—Boom! Boom!
While you may. Boom! Boom!
We will meet in the sky by and by."

[*MILLER and his WIFE and the KIDS are all roaring with laughter. LILY giggles hysterically.*]

Miller. [*Subsiding at last.*] Haw, haw. He's a case, if ever there was one! Darned if you can help laughing at him—even when he's poking fun at you!

Mrs. Miller. Goodness, but he's a caution! Oh, my sides ache, I declare. But I suppose we really shouldn't. It only encourages him. But my lands—!

Lily. [*Suddenly gets up from her chair and stands rigidly, her face working—jerkily.*] That's just it—you shouldn't—even I laughed—it does encourage—that's been his downfall—everyone always laughing, everyone always saying what a card he is, what a case, what a caution, so funny—and he's gone on—and we're all responsible—making it easy for him—and all we do is laugh!

Miller. [*Worriedly.*] Now, Lily, now, you mustn't take on so! It isn't as serious as all that!

Lily. [*Bitterly.*] Maybe—it is—to me. Or was—once. [*Then she says contritely.*] I'm sorry, Nat. I'm sorry, Essie. I didn't mean to—I'm not feeling myself tonight. If you'll excuse me. I'll go in the front parlor and lie down on the sofa a while.

Mrs. Miller. Of course, Lily. You do whatever you've a mind to. [*LILY goes out.*]

Miller. [*Frowning—a little shamefaced.*] Hmm. I suppose she's right. Never knew Lily to come out with things that way before. Anything special happened, Essie?

Mrs. Miller. Nothing I know—except he'd promised to take her to the fireworks.

Miller. That's so. Well, supposing I take her. I don't want her to feel disappointed.

Mrs. Miller. [*Shaking her head.*] Wild horses couldn't drag her there now.

Miller. Hmm. I thought she'd got completely over her foolishness about him long ago.

Mrs. Miller. She never will.

Miller. She'd better. He's got fired out of that Waterbury job—Told me at the picnic after he'd got enough Dutch courage in him.

Mrs. Miller. Oh, dear—Isn't he the fool!

Miller. I knew something was wrong when he came back home. Well, I'll find a place for him on my paper again, of course. He always was the best news-getter this town ever had. But I'll tell him he's got to stop his damn nonsense.

Mrs. Miller. [*Doubtfully.*] Yes.

Miller. Well, no use sitting here mourning over spilt milk. [*He gets up, and MILDRED, TOMMY and MRS. MILLER follow his example. The CHILDREN quiet and a bit awed.*] You kids go out in the yard and try to keep quiet for a while, so's your Uncle Sid'll get to sleep and your Aunt Lily can rest.

Tommy. [*Mournfully.*] Ain't we going to set off the sky rockets and Roman candles, Pa?

Miller. Later, son, later. It isn't dark enough for them yet, anyway.

Mildred. Come on, Tommy. I'll see he keeps quiet, Pa.

[*MILDRED and TOMMY go out.*]

Miller. That's a good girl. [*RICHARD remains sitting, sunk in bitter, gloomy thoughts. MILLER glances at him;—then a bit irritably.*] Well, Melancholy Dane, what are you doing?

Richard. [*Darkly.*] I'm going out—
[*Then suddenly.*] Do you know what I think? It's Aunt Lily's fault Uncle Sid's going to ruin. It's all because he loves her, and she keeps him dangling after her, and

eggs him on and ruins his life—like all women love to ruin men's lives! I don't blame him for drinking himself to death! What does he care if he dies, after the way she's treated him! I'd do the same thing myself if I were in his boots!

Mrs. Miller. [*Indignantly.*] Richard! You stop that talk!

Richard. [*Quotes bitterly.*]
 "Drink! For you know not whence you come nor why.

Drink! For you know not why you go nor where!"

Miller. [*Losing his temper—harshly.*]
 Listen here, young man! I've had about all

I can stand of your nonsense for one day! You're growing a lot too big for your size, seems to me! You keep that damn fool talk to yourself, you hear me—or you're going to regret it! Mind, now!

[*He strides angrily out.*]

Mrs. Miller. [*Still indignant.*] Richard, I'm ashamed of you, that's what I am.

[*She follows her HUSBAND. RICHARD is bitter, humiliated, wronged, even his father turned enemy, his face growing more and more rebellious.*]

Richard. Aw, what the hell do I care? I'll show them!

[*He turns and goes out.*]

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE I

The back room of a bar in a small hotel—a small, dingy room, dimly lighted by two fly-specked globes in two fly-specked wall brackets left and right of hall door left center. At right, front, is the swinging door leading to the bar. At rear of door, against the rear wall, is a nickel-in-the-slot player-piano. In the rear wall, left center, is a door leading to the "Family Entrance" and the stairway to the upstairs rooms. In the left wall is a window with closed shutters. Three tables with stained tops, three chairs around each table, are down right, against rear wall just left of piano, and up left.

The hideous saffron-colored wall-paper is blotched and spotted. It is about ten the same night.

[*RICHARD and BELLE are discovered sitting at table up left. BELLE in chair above table and RICHARD in chair left of table.*

BELLE is twenty, a rather pretty peroxide blonde, a typical college "tart" of the period, and of the cheaper variety, dressed with tawdry flashiness. But she is a fairly recent recruit to the ranks, and is still a bit remorseful behind her make-up and defiantly careless manner. BELLE has an empty gin-rickey glass before her, RICHARD a half-empty glass of beer. He looks horribly timid, embarrassed and guilty, but at the same time thrilled and proud of at last min-

gling with the pace that kills. The player-piano is grinding out "Bedelia." The BARTENDER, a stocky young Irishman with a foxily cunning, stupid face and a cynically wise grin, stands just inside the bar entrance, watching them.

Belle. [*With an impatient glance at her escort—rattling the ice in her empty glass.*] Drink up your beer, why don't you? It's getting flat.

Richard. [*Embarrassedly.*] I let it get that way on purpose. I like it better when it's flat.

[*But he hastily gulps down the rest of his glass as if it were some nasty-tasting medicine. The BARTENDER chuckles audibly. BELLE glances at him.*]

Belle. [*Nodding at the player-piano scornfully.*] Say, George, is "Bedelia" the latest to hit this hick burg? Well, it's only a couple of years old! You'll catch up in time! Why don't you get a new roll for that old box?

Bartender. [*With a grin.*] Complain to the boss, not me. We're not used to having Candy Kiddoes like you around—or maybe we'd get up to date.

Belle. [*With a professionally arch grin at him.*] Don't kid me, please. I can't bear it. [*Then she sings to the music from the piano, her eyes now on RICHARD.*] "Bedelia, I'd like to feel yer." [*The BARTENDER laughs. She smirks at RICHARD.*] Ever hear those words to it, Kid?

Richard. [*Who has heard them but is shocked at hearing a girl say them—putting*

on a blasé air.] Sure, lots of times. That's old.

Belle. [With a meaning smirk, edging her chair closer and putting a hand over one of his.] Then why don't you act as if you knew what they were all about?

Richard. [Terribly flustered.] Sure, I've heard that old parody lots of times. What do you think I am?

Belle. I don't know, Kid. Honest to God, you've got me guessing.

Bartender. [With a mocking chuckle.] He's a hot sport, can't you tell it? I never seen such a spender. My head's dizzy bringing in drinks!

Belle. [Laughs irritably—to RICHARD.] Don't let him kid you. You show him. Loosen up and buy another drink, what say?

Richard. [Humiliated—manfully.] Sure. Excuse me. I was thinking of something else. Have anything you like. [He turns to the BARTENDER.] See what the lady will have—and have one on me yourself.

Bartender. [Coming to the table—with a wink at BELLE as he picks up empty glasses.] That's talking! Didn't I say you were a sport? I'll take a cigar on you. [To BELLE.] What's yours, Kiddo—the same?

Belle. Yes. And forget the house rules this time and remember a rickey is supposed to have gin in it.

Bartender. [Grinning.] I'll try to—seeing it's your. [Then to RICHARD.] What's yours—another beer?

Richard. [Shyly.] A small one, please. I'm not thirsty.

Belle. [Calculatedly taunting.] Say, honest, are things that slow up at Harvard? If they had you down at New Haven, they'd put you in a kindergarten! Don't be such a dead one! Filling up on beer will only make you sleepy. Have a man's drink!

Richard. [Shamefaced—weakly.] All right. I was going to. Bring me a sloe-gin fizz.

Belle. [To BARTENDER.] And make it a real one.

Bartender. [With a wink.] I get you. Something that'll warm him up, eh?

[He goes into the bar.]

Belle. [Looks after BARTENDER irritably.] Christ, what a dump! [RICHARD is startled and shocked by the curse and looks down at the table.] If this isn't the deadeast burg I ever struck! Bet they take the sidewalks in after nine o'clock. [Then turning on him.] Say, honestly, Kid, does your mother know you're out?

Richard. [Defensively.] Aw, cut it out, why don't you—trying to kid me!

Belle. [Glances at him—then resolves on a new tack—patting his hand.] All right. I didn't mean to, dearie. Please don't get sore at me.

Richard. I'm not sore.

Belle. [Seductively.] You see, it's this way with me. I think you're one of the sweetest kids I've ever met—and I could like you such a lot—if you'd give me half a chance—instead of acting so cold and indifferent.

Richard. I'm not cold and indifferent. [Then solemnly tragic.] It's only that I've got—a weight on my mind.

Belle. [Impatiently.] Well, get it off your mind.

Bartender. [Comes in, bringing the drinks; setting them down—with a wink at BELLE.] This'll warm him up for you. Forty cents, that is—with the cigar.

Richard. [Pulls out his roll and hands a dollar bill over—with exaggerated carelessness.] Keep the change.

[BELLE emits a gasp and seems about to protest, then thinks better of it. The BARTENDER cannot believe his luck for a moment—then pockets the bill hastily, as if afraid RICHARD will change his mind.]

Bartender. [Respect in his voice.] Thank you very much, sir.

Richard. [Grandly.] Don't mention it.

Bartender. I hope you like the drink. I took special pains with it. [The voice of the SALESMAN, who has just come in the bar, calls "Hey! Anybody here?" and a coin is rapped on the bar.] I'm coming.

[The BARTENDER goes out.]

Belle. [Remonstrating gently, a new appreciation for her escort's possibilities in her voice.] You shouldn't be so generous, Dearie. Gets him in bad habits. A dime would have been plenty.

Richard. Ah, that's all right. I'm no tightwad.

Belle. That's the talk I like to hear. [With a quick look toward the bar, she stealthily pulls up her dress—to RICHARD'S shocked fascination—and takes a package of cheap cigarettes from her stocking.] Keep an eye out for that bartender, Kid, and tell me if you see him coming. Girls are only allowed to smoke upstairs in the rooms, he said.

Richard. [Embarrassedly.] All right. I'll watch.

Belle. [Holds the package out to him.] Have a Sweet? You smoke, don't you?

Richard. [Taking one.] Sure! I've been smoking for the last two years—on the sly.

[*She lights his cigarette, then her own and throws match on floor with elaborate nonchalance.*] But next year I'll be allowed—that is, pipes and cigars. [*He puffs but does not inhale—then, watching her with shocked concern as she inhales deeply.*] Say, you oughtn't to inhale like that! Smoking's awful bad for girls, anyway, even if they don't—

Belle. [Cynically amused.] Afraid it will stunt my growth? Gee, Kid, you are a scream! You'll grow up to be a minister yet! [*RICHARD looks shamefaced. She scans him impatiently—then pushes his drink toward him, and holds up her drink.*] Well, here's how! Bottoms up, now! Show me you really know how to drink. [*RICHARD follows her example and they both drink the whole contents of their glasses—RICHARD longest—without setting them down.*] There! That's something like! Feel better?

Richard. [*Proud of himself—with a shy smile.*] You bet.

Belle. Well, you'll feel still better in a minute—and then maybe you won't be so distant and unfriendly, eh?

Richard. I'm not.

Belle. Yes, you are. I think you just don't like me.

Richard. [*More manfully.*] I do too like you.

Belle. How much? A lot?

Richard. Yes, a lot.

Belle. Show me how much! [*Then, as he fidgets embarrassedly.*] Want me to come sit on your lap?

Richard. Yes—I—

[*She comes and sits on his lap. He looks desperately uncomfortable, but the gin is rising to his head and he feels proud of himself and devilish, too.*]

Belle. Why don't you put your arm around me? [*He does so awkwardly.*] No, not that dead way. Hold me tight. You needn't be afraid of hurting me. I like to be held tight, don't you?

Richard. Sure I do.

Belle. 'Specially when it's by a nice handsome kid like you. [*Ruffling his hair.*] Gee, you've got pretty hair, do you know it? Honest, I'm awfully strong for you! Why can't you be about me? I'm not so awfully ugly, am I?

Richard. No, you're—you're pretty.

Belle. You don't say it as if you meant it.

Richard. I do mean it—honest.

Belle. Then why don't you kiss me? [*She bends down her lips toward his. He hesitates, then kisses her a quick short peck.*] Call that kissing? Here. [*She holds his head and*

fastens her lips on his and holds them there. He starts and struggles, then jerks his head away. She laughs.] What's the matter, Honey Boy? Haven't you ever kissed like that before?

Richard. Sure. Lots of times.

Belle. Then why did you jump—as if I'd bitten you? [*Squirming around on his lap.*] Gee, I'm getting just crazy about you! What shall we do about it, eh? Tell me.

Richard. I—don't know. [*Then boldly.*] I—I'm crazy about you, too.

Belle. [*Hugging him again.*] Just think of the wonderful time Edith and your friend, Wint, are having—while we sit down here like two dead ones! A room only costs two dollars. And, seeing I like you so much, I'd only take five dollars—from you. I'd do it for nothing—for you—only I've got to live and I owe my room rent in New Haven—and you know how it is. I get ten dollars from every one else. Honest! [*She kisses him again, then gets up from his lap—briskly.*] Come on. Go out and tell the bartender you want a room. And hurry. Honest, I'm so strong for you I can hardly wait to get you upstairs.

Richard. [*Starts automatically for door—then hesitates, a great struggle going on in his mind—timidity, disgust at the money element, shocked modesty, and the guilty thought of MURIEL, fighting it out with the growing tipsiness that makes him want to be a hell of a fellow and go in for all forbidden fruit, and makes this tart a romantic, evil vampire in his eyes. Finally, he stops and mutters in confusion.*] I can't.

Belle. [*Starts for bar door.*] What, are you too bashful to ask for a room? Let me do it, then.

Richard. [*Desperately.*] No—I don't want you to—I don't want to.

Belle. [*Surveying him, anger coming into her eyes.*] Well, if you aren't the lousiest cheap skate—

Richard. I'm not a cheap skate!

Belle. Keep me around here all night fooling with you when I might be out with some real live one—if there is such a thing in this burg!—and now you quit on me! Don't be such a piker! You've got five dollars! I seen it when you paid for the drinks, so don't hand me any lies!

Richard. I—Who said I hadn't? And I'm not a piker. If you need the five dollars so bad—you can have it without—I mean, I'll be glad to give— [*RICHARD has been fumbling in his pocket and pulls out his nine-dollar roll and holds out the five to her.*]

Belle. [*Hardly able to believe her eyes,*

almost snatches it from his hand.] Thanks, Kid. [*Then laughs and immediately becomes sentimentally grateful.*] Gee— Oh, thanks— Gee, forgive me for losing my temper and bawling you out, will you? Gee, you're a regular peach! You're the nicest kid I've ever met!

[She hugs him and he grins proudly, a hero to himself now on many counts.]

Richard. [*Grandly—and quite tipsily.*] It's—nothing—only too glad.

Belle. Come on, let's have another drink—and this time I'll blow you just to show my appreciation. [*She calls.*] Hey, George! Bring us another round—the same!

Richard. [*A remnant of caution coming to him.*] I don't know as I ought to—

Belle. Oh, another won't hurt you. And I want to blow you, see.

Richard. [*Boldly draws his chair closer and puts an arm around her—tipsily.*] I like you a lot—now I'm getting to know you. You're a darned nice girl.

Belle. Nice is good! Tell me another! Well, if I'm so nice, why didn't you want to take me upstairs? That's what I don't get.

Richard. [*Lying boldly.*] I did want to—only I— [*Then he adds solemnly.*] I've sworn off.

Bartender. [*Enters with the drinks. Setting them on table.*] Here's your pleasure. [*Then, regarding RICHARD'S arm about her waist.*] Ho-ho, we're coming on, I see.

[RICHARD grins at him muzzily.]

Belle. [*Digs into her purse and gives him right change plus a dime tip.*] Here. This is mine. [*BARTENDER goes out. She puts the five RICHARD has given her in her stocking and picks up her glass.*] Here's how—and thanks again. [*She sips.*]

Richard. [*Boisterously.*] Bottoms up! Bottoms up! [*He drinks all of his down and sighs with exaggerated satisfaction.*] Gee, that's good stuff, all right.

Belle. [*Watches him finish his drink.*] What did you mean a minute ago when you said you'd sworn off?

Richard. [*Solemnly.*] I took an oath I'd be faithful.

Belle. [*Cynically.*] Till death do us part, eh? Who's the girl?

Richard. [*Shortly.*] Never mind.

Belle. [*Bristling.*] I'm not good enough to talk about her, I suppose?

Richard. I didn't mean that. You're all right— [*Then with tipsy gravity.*] Only you oughtn't to lead this kind of life. It isn't right—for a nice girl like you. Why don't you reform?

Belle. [*Sharply.*] Nix on that line of

talk— Can it. You hear! You can do a lot with me for five dollars—but you can't reform me. See!

Richard. I—I didn't mean to hurt your feelings.

Belle. I know you didn't mean. You're only like a lot of people who mean well, to hear them tell it. [*Changing the subject bitterly.*] So you're faithful to your one love, eh? [*With an ugly smile, speaks nastily.*] And how about her? Bet you she's out with a guy under some bush this minute, giving him all he wants.

Richard. [*Starting up in his chair—angrily.*] Don't you say that! Don't you dare—!

Belle. [*Unimpressed—with a cynical shrug of her shoulders.*] All right. Have it your own way—and be a sucker! It cuts no ice with me.

Richard. You don't know her or—

Belle. [*Sharply.*] And don't want to. Shut up about her, can't you?

[She stares before her bitterly. RICHARD subsides into scowling gloom. He is becoming perceptibly more intoxicated with each moment now. The BARTENDER and the SALESMAN appear just inside swinging door. The BARTENDER nods toward BELLE, giving the SALESMAN a wink. The SALESMAN grins and comes into the room, carrying his highball in his hand. He is a stout, jowly-faced man in his late thirties, dressed with cheap nattiness, with the professional breeziness and jocular kid-'em-along manner of his kind. BELLE looks up as he enters and he and she exchange glances of complete recognition. She knows his type by heart and he knows hers.]

Salesman. [*Crosses to table at right, grinning genially—sits in chair right of table; speaks insinuatingly.*] Good evening.

Belle. [*Returning the smile and speaks with same inflection.*] Good evening.

Salesman. Hope I'm not butting in on your party—but my dogs were giving out standing at that bar.

Belle. All right with me. [*Giving RICHARD a rather contemptuous look.*] I've got no party on.

Salesman. That sounds hopeful.

Richard. [*Suddenly recites sentimentally.*] "But I wouldn't do such, 'cause I loved her too much, but I learned about women from her."¹ [*RICHARD looks with a scowl at the SALESMAN, then turns to BELLE.*] Let's have 'nother drink!

¹ From Kipling's *The Ladies*.

Belle. You've had enough.

[*RICHARD subsides, muttering to himself.*]

Salesman. What is it—a child poet or a child actor?

Belle. Don't know. Got me guessing.

Salesman. Well, if you could shake the cradle-robbing act, maybe we could do a little business.

Belle. That's easy. I just pull my freight. [*She then shakes RICHARD by the arm.*]
Listen, Kid. Here's an old friend of mine, Mr. Smith of New Haven, just come in. I'm going over and sit at his table for a while, see? And you better go home.

Richard. [*Blinking at her and scowling.*] I'm never going home! I'll show them!

Belle. Have it your own way—only let me up.

[*She takes his arm from around her and goes to sit by the SALESMAN.*]

Richard. [*Stares after her offendedly.*] Go on. What do I care about what you do? [*He recites scornfully.*] "For a woman's only a woman, but a good cigar's a smoke."¹

Salesman. [*As BELLE sits beside him.*] Well, what kind of beer will you have, Sister?

Belle. Mine's a gin rickey.

Salesman. You've got extravagant tastes, I'm sorry to see.

Richard. [*Suddenly begins to recite sepulchrally.*]

"Yet each man kills the thing he loves,

By each let this be heard."

Salesman. [*Griming.*] Say, this is rich! [*He calls encouragement to RICHARD.*]
That's swell dope, young feller. Give us some more.

Richard. [*Ignoring him—goes on more rhetorically.*]

"Some do it with a bitter look,

Some with a flattering word,

The coward does it with a kiss,

The brave man with a sword!"²

[*He stares at BELLE gloomily and mutters tragically.*] I did it with a kiss! I'm a coward.

Salesman. That's the old stuff, Kid. You've got something on the ball, all right, all right! Give us another—right over the old pan, now!

Richard. [*Rises, faces them and raises arm.*] "Oho! They cried"—

Belle. [*Laughs.*] Get the hook!

Richard. [*Glowering at her. Tragically.*]

"The world is wide,

But fettered limbs go lame!

And once, or twice,

To throw the dice

Is a gentlemanly game,

But he does not win who plays with Sin

In the Secret House of Shame!"¹

Belle. [*Angrily.*] Aw, can it! Give us a rest from that bunk!

Salesman. [*Mockingly.*] This gal of yours don't appreciate poetry. She's a lowbrow. But I'm the kid that eats it up. My middle name is Kelly and Sheets! Give us some more of the same! Do you know "The Lobster and the Wise Guy?" [*Turns to BELLE seriously.*] No kidding, that's a peacherino. I heard a guy recite it at Poli's. Maybe this nut knows it. Do you, Kid?

[*But RICHARD only glowers at him gloomily without answering.*]

Belle. [*Surveying RICHARD contemptuously.*] He's copped a fine skinful—and gee, he's hardly had anything.

Richard. [*Suddenly—with a dire emphasis.*] "And then—at ten o'clock—Eilert Lovborg will come—with vine leaves in his hair!"

Belle. And bats in his belfry; if he's you!

Richard. [*Regards her bitterly—then suddenly starts to his feet bellicosely—to the SALESMAN.*] I don't believe you ever knew this lady in New Haven at all! You just picked her up now! You leave her alone, you hear! You won't do anything to her—not while I'm here to protect her!

Belle. [*Laughing.*] Oh, my God! Listen to it!

Salesman. Sssh! This is a scream! Wait! [*He addresses RICHARD in tone of exaggerated mock melodrama.*] Curse you, Jack Dalton—if I won't unhand her, what then?

Richard. [*Threateningly.*] I'll give you a good punch in the snoot, that's what!

[*He starts toward SALESMAN.*]

Salesman. [*With mock terror—screams in falsetto.*] Help! Help!

[*The BARTENDER comes in irritably.*]

Bartender. Hey. Cut out the noise! What the hell's up with you?

Salesman. [*Laughing—winks at BARTENDER.*] He's going to murder me.

Richard. [*Tipsily.*] He's too damn fresh.

Salesman. [*Gets a bright idea for eliminating RICHARD.*] Say, George! [*Seriously to the BARTENDER.*] It's none of my business, Brother, but if I were in your boots I'd give this young souse the gate. He's under age; any fool can see that.

¹ From Kipling's *The Betrothed*.

² From Wilde's *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*.

¹ From *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*.

Bartender. [*Guiltily.*] He told me he was over eighteen.

Salesman. Yes, and I tell you I'm Teddy Roosevelt—but you don't have to believe me. If you're not looking for trouble, I'd advise you to get him started for some other gin mill and let them do the lying if anything comes up.

Bartender. Hmm. [*He turns to RICHARD and tries to get him to his feet.*] Come on, now. On your way! You'll start no trouble in here! Beat it, now!

Richard. I will not beat it!

Bartender. Oho, won't you?

[*He gives him a shove.*]

Belle. [*Callously.*] Give him the bum's rush! I'm sick of his bull!

[*RICHARD turns furiously and tries to punch the BARTENDER.*]

Bartender. [*Avoids the punch.*] Oho, you would, would you!

[*He grabs RICHARD by the back of the neck and the seat of the pants and marches him ignominiously toward the door.*]

Leggo of me, you dirty coward!

Bartender. Quiet now—or I'll pin a Mary Ann on your jaw that'll quiet you!

[*He rushes him through the door and a moment later the outer doors are heard swinging back and forth.*]

Salesman. [*With a chuckle.*] Hand it to me, Kid! How was that for a slick way of getting rid of him?

Belle. [*Suddenly sentimental.*] Poor kid. I hope he makes home all right. I liked him—before he got soused.

Salesman. Who is he?

Belle. The boy who's upstairs with my friend told me, but I didn't pay much attention. Name's Miller. His old man runs a paper in this one-horse burg, I think he said.

Salesman. [*Emits a whistle.*] Phew! He must be Nat Miller's kid, then.

Bartender. [*Coming back from the bar.*] Well, he's on his way—with a good boot in the tail to help him!

Salesman. [*With a malicious chuckle.*] Yes? Well, maybe that boot will cost you a job, Brother. Know Nat Miller who runs the *Globe*? That's his kid.

Bartender. [*His face falling.*] The hell it is! Who said so?

Salesman. This baby doll. Say, I'll go keep cases on him—see he gets on the trolley all right, anyway. Nat Miller's a good scout.

[*He hurries out.*]

Bartender. [*Viciously.*] Damn the luck! If he ever finds out I served his kid, he'll run me out of town. [*He turns on BELLE furiously.*] Why didn't you put me wise, you lousy tramp, you!

Belle. Hey! I don't stand for that kind of talk—not from no hick beer-squirter like you, see!

Bartender. [*Furiously.*] You don't, don't you! Who was it but you told me to hand him dynamite in that fizz? [*He gives her chair a push that almost throws her to the floor.*] Beat it, you—and beat it quick—or I'll call Sullivan from the corner and have you run in for street-walking! [*He gives her a push that lands her in family-entrance doorway.*] Get the hell out of here—and no long waits!

Belle. [*Turns in doorway and calls back viciously.*] I'll fix you for this, you thick Mick, if I have to go to jail for it.

[*She goes out and slams the door.*]

Bartender. [*Looks after her worriedly for a second—then shrugs his shoulders.*] That's only her bull. [*Then with a sigh as he picks up glasses from table.*] Them lousy tramps is always getting this dump in Dutch!

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE II

Same as Act One—sitting-room of the Miller home—about eleven o'clock the same night.

[*MILLER is sitting in his favorite rocking chair. He has discarded collar and tie, coat and shoes, for comfort's sake, and wears an old, worn, brown dressing-gown and disreputable-looking carpet*

slippers. He has his reading specs on and is running over items in a newspaper. But his mind is plainly preoccupied and worried, and he is not paying much attention to what he reads.

MRS. MILLER sits by table at right front. She also has on her specs. A sewing basket is on her lap and she is trying hard to keep her attention fixed on the doily she is doing. But, as in the

case of her husband but much more apparently, her mind is preoccupied with another matter, and she is obviously on tenterhooks of nervous uneasiness.

LILY is sitting in the armchair. She is pretending to read a novel, but her attention wanders, too, and her expression is sad, although now it has lost all its bitterness and become submissive and resigned again.

MILDRED sits at the desk at left, writing two words over and over again, stopping each time to survey the result critically, biting her tongue, intensely concentrated on her work.

TOMMY sits at the front end of the sofa at right. He has had a hard day and is terribly sleepy but will not acknowledge it. His eyes blink shut on him; his head begins to nod, but he isn't giving up, and every time he senses any of the family glancing in his direction, he goads himself into a bright-eyed wakefulness.]

Mildred. [Finally surveys the two words she has been writing and is satisfied with them.] There! [She takes the paper over to her MOTHER.] Look, Ma. I've been practising a new way of writing my name. Don't you think it's the real goods?

Mrs. Miller. [Pulled out of her preoccupation.] Don't talk that horrible slang. My goodness, if my mother'd ever heard me—

Mildred. Well, don't you think it's nice, then?

Mrs. Miller. [Sinks back into preoccupation—scanning the paper—vaguely.] Yes, very nice, Mildred—very nice, indeed.

[Hands the paper back mechanically.]

Mildred. [Is a little piqued, but smiles.] Absent-minded! I don't believe you even saw it!

[Turns and shows it to LILY. MILLER gives an uneasy glance at his WIFE and then, as if afraid of meeting her eye, looks quickly back at his paper again.]

Mrs. Miller. [Staring before her—sighs worriedly.] Oh, I do wish that Richard would come home!

Miller. There now, Essie. He'll be in any minute now. Don't you worry about him.

Mrs. Miller. But I do worry about him!

Lily. [Surveying MILDRED's handiwork—smiling.] This is fine, Mildred. Your penmanship is improving wonderfully. But don't you think that maybe you've got a little too many flourishes?

Mildred. [Disappointed.] But, Aunt Lily, that's just what I was practising hardest on.

Mrs. Miller. [With another heavy sigh.] What time is it now, Nat?

Miller. [Adopting a joking tone.] I'm going to buy a clock for in here. You have me reaching for my watch every couple of minutes. [He has pulled his watch out of his vest pocket—with forced carelessness.] Only a little past ten.

Mrs. Miller. Why, you said it was that an hour ago! Nat Miller, you're telling me a fib so's not to worry me. You let me see that watch!

Miller. [Guiltily.] Well, it's a quarter to eleven—but that's not so late—when you remember it's the Fourth of July.

Mrs. Miller. If you don't stop talking Fourth of July—!

Mildred. [Has brought her paper around to her FATHER and now she shoves it under his nose.] Look, Pa.

Miller. [Seizes on this interruption with eager relief—scanning the paper.] Let's see. Hmm. Seems to me you've been inventing a new signature each week lately. What are you in training for—writing checks? You must be planning to catch a rich husband.

Mildred. [With an arch toss of her head.] No wedding bells for me! But how do you like it, Pa?

Miller. It's overpowering—no other word for it, overpowering! You could put it on the Declaration of Independence and not feel ashamed!

[He passes paper to MILDRED. Both laugh.]

Mrs. Miller. [Desolately, almost on the verge of tears.] It's all right for you to laugh and joke with Mildred! I'm the only one in this house who seems to care—

[Her lips tremble.]

Mildred. [A bit disgustedly.] Ah, Ma, Dick only sneaked off to the fireworks at the beach, you wait and see.

Mrs. Miller. Those fireworks were over long ago. If he had, he'd be home.

Lily. [Soothingly.] He probably couldn't get a seat, the trolleys are so jammed, and he had to walk home.

Miller. [Seizing on this with relief.] Yes, I never thought of that, but I'll bet that's it.

Mildred. Ah, don't let him worry you, Ma. He just wants to show off he's heart-broken about that silly Muriel—and get everyone fussing over him and wondering if he hasn't drowned himself or something.

Mrs. Miller. [Snappily.] You be quiet! I really believe you're that hard-hearted you haven't got a heart in you! [With an accusing glance at her HUSBAND.] One thing I know, you don't get that from me!

[*He chuckles and resumes reading paper. She sniffs and looks away from him around the room.*]

Tommy. [*Who is nodding and blinking, is afraid her eye is on him. He straightens alertly and speaks in a voice that is, in spite of his effort, dripping with drowsiness.*] Let me see what you wrote, Mid.

Mildred. [*Cruelly mocking.*] You? You're so sleepy you couldn't see it!

Tommy. [*Valiantly.*] I am not sleepy!

Mrs. Miller. [*Has fixed her eye on him.*] My gracious, I was forgetting you were still up! You run up to bed this minute! It's hours past your bedtime!

Tommy. But it's the Fourth of July. Ain't it, Pa?

Mrs. Miller. [*Again gives her HUSBAND an accusing stare.*] There! You see what you've done? You might know he'd copy your excuses! [*Then sharply, to TOMMY.*] You heard what I said, Young Man!

Tommy. Aw, Ma, can't I stay up a little longer?

Mrs. Miller. I said no! You obey me and no more arguing about it!

Tommy. Aw! I should think I could stay up till Dick—

Miller. [*Kindly but firmly.*] You heard your Ma say no more arguing. When she says git, you better git.

Tommy. [*Accepts his fate resignedly and starts around kissing them all good night. Leans over table and kisses LILY.*] Good night, Aunt Lily.

Lily. [*Fondly.*] Good night, dear. Sleep well.

Tommy. [*Pecking at MILDRED but obviously not kissing her.*] Good night, you.

Mildred. Good night, you.

Tommy. [*Sitting on arm of MILLER'S chair, snuggles against him.*] Good night, Pa.

Miller. Good night, Son. [*Kisses him.*] Sleep tight.

Tommy. [*Kissing her.*] Good night, Ma.

Mrs. Miller. Good night. Here! You look feverish. [*She feels his brow with her left hand.*] No, you're all right. Hurry up, now. And don't forget your prayers.

Tommy. [*Goes slowly to the doorway, then turns suddenly, the discovery of another excuse lighting up his face.*] Here's another thing, Ma. When I was up to the water closet last—

Mrs. Miller. [*Sharply.*] When you were where?

Tommy. The bathroom.

Mrs. Miller. That's better.

Tommy. Uncle Sid was snoring like a fog

horn—and he's right next to my room. How can I ever get to sleep while he's—

[*He is overcome by a jaw-cracking yawn.*]

Mrs. Miller. I guess you'd get to sleep all right if you were inside a fog horn! You run along now! [*TOMMY gives up, grins sleepily and moves off to bed. As soon as he is off her mind, all her former uneasiness comes back on MRS. MILLER tenfold. She sighs, moves restlessly, then finally asks.*] What time is it now, Nat?

Miller. Now, Essie, I just told you a minute ago.

Mrs. Miller. [*Resentfully.*] I don't see how you can take it so calm! Here it's midnight, you might say, and our Richard still out, and we don't even know where he is.

Mildred. There's someone! Bet that's him now, Ma.

Mrs. Miller. [*Her anxiety immediately turning to relieved anger.*] You give him a good piece of your mind, Nat! You're too easy with him, that's the whole trouble!

[*SOMEONE whistling "March, March Down the Field." Yale Song.*]

Mildred. No, that isn't Dick. It's Art.

Mrs. Miller. [*Her face falling.*] Oh!

[*A moment later ARTHUR enters, whistling softly half under his breath, looking complacently pleased with himself.*]

Miller. [*Surveys him over his glasses, not with enthusiasm—shortly.*] So you're back, eh? We thought it was Richard.

Arthur. Is he still out? Where'd he go to?

Miller. That's just what we'd like to know. You didn't run into him anywhere, did you?

Arthur. No. I've been at the Rands' ever since dinner. I suppose he sneaked off to the beach to watch the fireworks.

Miller. [*Pretending an assurance he is far from feeling.*] Of course. That's what we've been trying to tell your mother, but she insists on worrying her head off.

Mrs. Miller. But if he knew he was going to the fireworks why wouldn't he say so? He knew we'd let him.

Arthur. [*With calm wisdom.*] That's easy, Ma. [*He grins superiorly.*] Didn't you hear him this morning showing off bawling out the Fourth like an anarchist? He wouldn't want to renege on that to you—but he'd want to see the old fireworks just the same. [*He adds complacently.*] I know. He's at that foolish age.

Miller. [*Stares at ARTHUR with ill-concealed astonishment, then grins, jokingly.*] Well, Arthur, by gosh, you make me feel as if I owed you an apology when you talk horse sense like that! [*He turns to his*

WIFE, greatly relieved.] Arthur's hit the nail right on the head, I think, Essie. That's where he is—

Mrs. Miller. [*With a sigh.*] Well—I wish he was home.

Arthur. [*Lights pipe with solemn gravity.*] He oughtn't to be allowed out this late at his age. I wasn't—Fourth or no Fourth—if I remember.

Miller. [*A twinkle in his eyes.*] Don't tax your memory trying to recall those ancient days of your youth.

[MILDRED laughs and ARTHUR looks sheepish. But he soon regains his aplomb and changes the subject tactfully.]

Arthur. [*Importantly.*] We had a corking dinner at the Rands'. We had sweetbreads on toast.

Mrs. Miller. [*Arousing momentarily from her depression.*] Just like the Rands to put on airs before you! I never could see anything to sweetbreads. Always taste like soap to me. And no real nourishment to them. I wouldn't have the pesky things on my table.

[ARTHUR again feels sat upon.]

Mildred. [*Teasingly.*] Did you kiss Elsie good night?

Arthur. Stop trying to be so darn funny all the time! You give me a pain in the ear!

Mildred. And that's where she gives me a pain, the stuck-up thing! Thinks she's the whole cheese!

Miller. [*Irritably.*] And it's where your everlasting wrangling gives me a pain, you two. Give us a rest!

[*There is silence for a moment.*]

Mrs. Miller. [*Sighs worriedly again.*] I do wish that boy would get home!

Miller. [*Glances at her uneasily, peeks surreptitiously at his watch—then has an inspiration and turns to ARTHUR.*] Arthur, what's this I hear about your having such a good singing voice? Rand was telling me he liked nothing better than to hear you sing—said you did every night you were up there. Why don't you ever give us folks at home here a treat?

Arthur. [*Pleased, but still nursing wounded dignity.*] I thought you'd only sit on me.

Mrs. Miller. [*Perking up—proudly.*] Arthur has a real nice voice. He practices when you're not at home. I didn't know you cared for singing, Nat.

Miller. Well, I do—nothing better—and when I was a boy I had a fine voice myself and folks used to say I'd ought— [*Then abruptly, mindful of his painful experience with reminiscence at dinner, looking about*

him guiltily.] Hmm. But don't hide your light under a bushel, Arthur. Why not give us a song or two now? You can play for him, can't you, Mildred?

Mildred. [*With a toss of her head.*] I can play as well as Elsie Rand, at least!

Arthur. [*Ignoring her—clearing his throat importantly.*] I've been singing a lot tonight, Pa. I don't know if my voice—

Mildred. [*Forgetting her grudge, grabs her BROTHER'S hand and tugs at it.*] Come on. Don't play modest. You know you're just dying to show off!

[*This puts ARTHUR off it at once. He snatches his hand away from her angrily.*]

Arthur. Let go of me, you! [*Then with surly dignity.*] I don't feel like singing tonight, Pa. I will some other time.

Miller. [*Sharply.*] You let him alone, Mildred!

[*Then he winks at ARTHUR, indicating with his eyes and a nod of head MRS. MILLER, who has again sunk into worried brooding. He makes it plain by this pantomime that he wants him to sing to distract his MOTHER'S mind.*]

Arthur. [*Puts aside his pipe and gets up promptly.*] Oh—sure, I'll do the best I can.

[*He follows MILDRED off into the front parlor, where he switches on the lights.*]

Miller. [*To his WIFE.*] It won't keep Tommy awake. Nothing could. And Sid, he'd sleep through an earthquake. [*Then suddenly, looking through the front parlor—grumpily.*] Darn it, speak of the devil, here he comes. Well, he's had a good sleep and he'd ought to be sobered up. [*LILY gets up from her chair and looks around her hunted, as if for a place to hide. MILLER says soothingly.*] Lily, you just sit down and read your book and don't pay any attention to him.

[*She sits down again and bends over her book tensely. From the front parlor comes the tinkling of a piano as MILDRED runs over the scales. In the midst of this, SID enters. All the effervescence of his jag has worn off and he is now suffering from a bad case of hangover—nervous, sick, a prey to gloomy remorse and bitter feelings of self-loathing and self-pity. His eyes are blood-shot and puffed, his baldness tousled and tufty. He sidles into the room guiltily, his eyes shifting about, avoiding looking at anyone.*]

Sid. [*Forcing a sickly twitching smile.*] Hello.

Miller. [*Considerately casual.*] Hello, Sid.

Had a good nap? [Then, as SID swallows hard and is about to break into further speech, MILDRED'S voice comes from the front parlor, "I haven't played that in ever so long, but I'll try," and she starts an accompaniment. MILLER motions SID to be quiet.] Sssh! Arthur's going to sing for us. [SID flattens himself against the edge of the bookcase at center, rear, miserably self-conscious and ill at ease there but nervously afraid to move anywhere else. ARTHUR begins to sing. He has a fairly decent voice but his method is untrained sentimentality to a dripping degree. He sings that old sentimental favorite, "Then You'll Remember Me." The effect on his audience is instant. MILLER gazes before him with a ruminating melancholy, his face seeming to become gently sorrowful and old. MRS. MILLER stares before her, her expression becoming more and more doleful. LILY forgets to pretend to read her book but looks over it, her face growing tragically sad. As for SID, he is moved to his remorseful, guilt-stricken depths. His mouth pulls down at the corners and he seems about to cry. The song comes to an end. MILLER starts, then claps his hands enthusiastically and calls.] Well done, Arthur—well done! Why, you've a splendid voice! Give us some more! You liked that, didn't you, Essie?

Mrs. Miller. [Dolefully.] Yes—but it's sad—terrible sad.

Sid. [After swallowing hard, suddenly blurts out.] Essie. Nat and—and Lily—I—I want to apologize—for coming home—the way I did—there's no excuse—but I didn't mean—

Miller. [Sympathetically.] Of course, Sid. It's all forgotten.

Mrs. Miller. [Rousing herself—affectionately pitying.] Don't be a goose, Sid. We know how it is with picnics. You forget it.

[SID'S face lights up a bit but his gaze shifts to LILY with a mute appeal, hoping for a word from her which is not forthcoming. Her eyes are fixed on her book, her body tense and rigid.]

Sid. [Finally blurts out desperately.] Lily—I'm sorry—about the fireworks. Can you—forgive me?

[But LILY remains implacably silent. A stricken look comes over SID'S face.]

Miller. [Comes to SID'S rescue.] Sssh! We're going to have another song. Sit down, Sid. [SID, hanging his head, flees to the farthest corner, left front, and sits, facing front, hunched up, elbows on knees, face in hands, his round eyes childishly wounded and woe-begone. ARTHUR sings "Dearie, my

Dearie, nothing's worth while but dreams of you—" etc.—playing up its sentimental values for all he is worth. The effect on his audience is that of the previous song, intensified—especially upon SID. As he finishes, MILLER again starts and applauds.] Mighty fine, Arthur! You sang that darned well. Didn't he, Essie?

Mrs. Miller. [Dolefully.] Yes—but I wish he wouldn't sing such sad songs. [Then, her lips trembling.] Richard's always whistling that.

Miller. [Hastily calls.] Give us something cheery, next one, Arthur— You know, just for variety's sake—

Sid. [Suddenly turns toward LILY—his voice husky and choked with tears—in a passion of self-denunciation.] You're right, Lily!—right not to forgive me! I'm no good and never will be! You shouldn't even wipe your feet on me!—no good to myself or anybody else! If I had any guts I'd kill myself, and good riddance!—but I haven't! I'm yellow, too!—a yellow, drunken bum!

[He hides his face in his hands and begins to sob like a sick little boy. This is too much for LILY. All her bitter hurt and steely resolve to ignore and punish him vanish in a flash, swamped by a pityingly love for him. She runs and puts her arm around him—even kisses him tenderly and impulsively on his bald head, and soothes him as if he were a little boy. MRS. MILLER, almost equally moved, has half risen to go to her BROTHER, too, but MILLER winks and shakes his head vigorously and motions her to sit down.]

Lily. There! Don't cry, Sid! I can't bear it! Of course I forgive you. Haven't I always forgiven you? I know you're not to blame—so don't, Sid!

Sid. [Lifts a tearful, humbly grateful, pathetic face to her—but a face that the dawn of a cleansed conscience is already beginning to restore to its natural Puckish expression.] Do you really forgive me—I know I don't deserve it— Can you really—?

Lily. [Gently.] I told you I did, Sid—and I do.

Sid. [Kisses her hand humbly, like a big puppy licking it.] Thanks, Lily. I can't tell you— [In the front parlor, ARTHUR begins to sing rollickingly, "Waiting at the Church," and after the first line or two MILDRED joins in. SID'S face lights up with appreciation and, automatically, he begins to tap one foot in time, still holding fast to LILY'S hand. When they come to "sent around

a note, this is what he wrote," he can no longer resist, but joins in a shaky bawl.] "Can't get away to marry you today. My wife won't let me!"

[As the song finishes, the TWO in the other room laugh. MILLER and SID laugh. LILY smiles at SID's laughter. Only MRS. MILLER remains dolefully preoccupied, as if she hadn't heard.]

Miller. That's fine, Arthur and Mildred. That's darned good.

Sid. [Turning to LILY enthusiastically.] You ought to hear Vesta Victoria sing that! Gosh, she's great! I heard her at Hammerstein's Victoria— You remember that trip I made to New York.

Lily. [Her face suddenly grown tired and sad again—for her memory of certain aspects of that trip is the opposite from what he would like to recall at this moment—gently disengaging her hand from his—with a hopeless sigh.] Yes, I remember, Sid.

[He is overcome momentarily by guilty confusion. She goes quietly and sits. In the front parlor, MILDRED plays rather quietly. She and ARTHUR whistle softly.]

Mrs. Miller. [Suddenly.] What time is it now, Nat? [Then, without giving him a chance to answer.] Oh, I'm getting worried something dreadful, Nat! You don't know what might have happened to Richard! You read in the papers every day about boys getting run over by automobiles.

Lily. Oh, don't say that, Essie!

Miller. [Sharply, to conceal his own reawakened apprehension.] Don't get to imagining things, now!

Mrs. Miller. Well, why couldn't it happen, with everyone that owns one out tonight, and lots of those driving drunk? [On the verge of hysteria.] Oh, I know something dreadful's happened! And you can sit there listening to songs and laughing as if— Why don't you do something? Why don't you go out and find him? [She bursts into tears.]

Lily. [Comes to her quickly and puts her arm around her.] Essie, you mustn't worry so! You'll make yourself sick!

Mildred. [Comes hurrying in from front parlor.] What's the trouble? [ARTHUR appears in the doorway beside her.] Ah, don't cry, Ma! Dick'll turn up in a minute or two, wait and see!

Arthur. Sure, he will.

Miller. [Gets to his feet, frowning—soberly.] I was going out to look—if he wasn't back by twelve sharp. But I'll go now, if it'll ease your mind. I'll take the auto and drive out the beach road— [He is start-

ing to get his bathrobe off.] You better come with me, Arthur.

Arthur. Sure thing, Pa. [Suddenly he listens and says.] Shhh! That must be him now.

Mrs. Miller. Oh, thank God!

Miller. [With a sheepish smile.] Darn him! I'll give him hell for worrying us all like this!

[Then RICHARD lurches in violently. His eyes are glassy and wild. He leans with back against desk chair. The knees of his trousers are dirty, one of them torn from the sprawl on the sidewalk he has taken, following the BARTENDER's kick. They ALL gape at him, too paralyzed for a moment to say anything.]

Mrs. Miller. Richard! Oh, God, what's happened to him! He's gone crazy.

Sid. [The first to regain presence of mind.] Crazy, nothing. He's only soused!

Richard. [With a wild gesture of defiance, maudlinly dramatic.]

"Yesterday this Day's Madness did prepare Tomorrow's Silence, Triumph, or Despair. Drink! for—" ¹

Miller. [His face grown stern and angry, takes a threatening step toward him.] Richard! How—!

Mrs. Miller. [Hysterically.] Don't you strike him, Nat! Don't you—

Sid. [Grabbing his arm.] Steady, Nat! The boy don't know what he's doing!

Richard. [Drunkenly glorying in the sensation he is creating—recites with heroic, dramatic emphasis.] "And then—at ten o'clock—I will come—with vine leaves in my hair!"

[He laughs dramatically with a double-dyed sardonicism.]

Mrs. Miller. [Staring at him as if she couldn't believe her eyes.] Richard! You're intoxicated—! You bad, wicked boy, you!

Richard. [Forces a wicked leer to his lips and quotes with ponderous mockery.] "Fancy that, Hedda!" [Then suddenly his whole expression changes. His pallor takes on a greenish, sea-sick tinge, his eyes seem to be turned inward uneasily—and all pose gone, he calls to his MOTHER appealingly, like a sick little boy.] Ma! I feel—rotten!

[MRS. MILLER gives a cry and starts to go to him, but SID interrupts her.]

Sid. You let me take care of him, Essie. I know this game backwards.

Miller. [Putting his arm around his WIFE.] Yes, you leave him to Sid.

Sid. [His arm around RICHARD—leading

¹ From the Rubaiyat.

him off through the front parlor.] Come on, Old Sport! Upstairs we go! Your old Uncle Sid'll fix you up. He's the kid that wrote the book!

Mrs. Miller. [Staring after them—still aghast.] Oh, it's too terrible! Imagine our Richard! And did you hear him talking about some Hedda? Oh, I know he's been with one of those bad women, I know he has—my Richard!

[She hides her face on MILLER's shoulder and sobs heart-brokenly.]

Miller. [A tired, harassed, deeply worried look on his face—soothing her.] Now, now, you mustn't get to imagining such things! You mustn't, Essie!

[LILY and MILDRED and ARTHUR are standing about awkwardly with awed, shocked faces.]

CURTAIN

ACT FOUR

SCENE I

SCENE: The same—Sitting-room of the Miller home—about one in the afternoon of the following day.

[As the Curtain rises the family, with the exception of RICHARD, are discovered coming in through the back parlor from dinner in the dining-room. MILLER and his WIFE come first. His face is set in an expression of frowning severity. MRS. MILLER's face is drawn and worried. She has evidently had no rest yet from a long, sleepless, tearful night. SID is himself again, his expression as innocent as if nothing had occurred the previous day to remotely concern him. And outside of eyes that are bloodshot and nerves that are shaky, he shows no after-effects except that he is terribly sleepy. LILY is gently sad and depressed. MILDRED and TOMMY are subdued and covertly watching their FATHER. ARTHUR is self-consciously a virtuous young man against whom nothing can be said. The atmosphere is as stiltedly grave as if they were attending a funeral service. Their eyes keep fixed on the head of the house, who has gone to the window at left and is staring out frowningly, savagely chewing a toothpick.]

Miller. [Finally—irritably.] Damn it, I'd ought to be back at the office putting in some good licks! I've a whole pile of things that have got to be done today!

Mrs. Miller. [Accusingly.] You don't mean to tell me you're going back without seeing him!

Miller. [Exasperatedly.] 'Course I'm not! I wish you'd stop jumping to conclusions!

What else did I come home for, I'd like to know?

[He ends up very lamely and is irritably conscious of the fact.]

Tommy. [Who has been fidgeting restlessly—unable to bear the suspense a moment longer.] What's Dick done? Why is everyone scared to tell me?

Miller. [Seizes this as an escape valve—turns and fixes his YOUNGEST SON with a stern, forbidding eye.] Young man, I've never spanked you yet, but that don't mean I never will! You keep your mouth shut till you're spoken to—or I warn you something's going to happen!

Mrs. Miller. Yes, Tommy, you keep still and don't bother your Pa. [Then warningly to her HUSBAND.] Careful what you say, Nat. Little pitchers have big ears.

Miller. [Peremptorily.] You kids skeddaddle—all of you. Why are you always hanging around the house? Go out and play in the yard, or take a walk and get some fresh air! [MILDRED takes TOMMY's hand and leads him out. ARTHUR hangs back as if the designation "kids" couldn't possibly apply to him. His FATHER notices this—impatiently.] Arthur!

[ARTHUR goes out with a stiff, wounded dignity.]

Lily. [Tactfully.] I think I'll go for a walk, too.

[She goes out. SID makes a movement as if to follow her.]

Miller. I'd like you to stay, Sid—for a while, anyway.

Sid. Sure. [He sits down in the rocking chair at right, rear, of table and immediately yawns.] Gosh, I'm dead. Don't know what's the matter with me today. Can't seem to keep awake.

Miller. [With caustic sarcasm.] Maybe

that demon chowder you drank at the picnic poisoned you! [Sid looks sheepish and forces a grin. Then MILLER turns to his WIFE with the air of one who determinedly faces the unpleasant.] Where is Richard?

Mrs. Miller. [Flusteredly.] He's still in bed. I made him stay in bed to punish him—and I thought he ought to, anyway, after being so sick. But he says he feels all right.

Sid. [With another yawn.] 'Course he does. When you're young you can stand anything without it fazing you. Why, I remember when I could come down on the morning after fresh as a daisy and eat a breakfast of pork chops and fried onions and—

[He stops guiltily.]

Miller. [Bitingly.] I suppose that was before eating lobster shells had ruined your iron constitution!

Mrs. Miller. [Regards her BROTHER severely.] If I was in your shoes, I'd keep still! [Then, turning to MILLER.] Richard must be feeling better. He ate all the dinner I sent up, Norah says.

Miller. [Accusingly.] I thought you weren't going to give him any dinner—to punish him.

Mrs. Miller. [Guiltily.] Well—in his weakened condition—I thought it best— [Then defensively.] But you needn't think I haven't punished him. I've given him pieces of my mind he won't forget in a hurry. And I've kept reminding him his real punishment was still to come—that you were coming home to dinner on purpose—and then he'd learn that you could be terrible stern when he did such awful things.

Miller. [Stirs uncomfortably.] Hmm!

Mrs. Miller. And that's just what it's your duty to do—punish him good and hard! [Then hastily.] But you be careful how you go about it, Nat. Remember he's like you inside—too sensitive for his own good. And he never would have done it, I know, if it hadn't been for that darned little dunce, Muriel, and her numbskull father—and then all of us teasing him and hurting his feelings all day—and then you lost your temper and were so sharp with him right after dinner before he went out.

Miller. [Resentfully.] I see this is going to work round to where it's all my fault!

Mrs. Miller. Now, I didn't say that—did I? And here's another thing. You know as well as I, Richard would never have done such a thing alone. Why, he wouldn't know how! He must have been influenced and led by someone!

Miller. Yes, I believe that. Did you worm out of him who it was? [Then angrily.] By

God, I'll make whoever it was regret it!

Mrs. Miller. No, he wouldn't admit there was any one. [Then triumphantly.] But there is one thing I did worm out of him—and I can tell you it relieved my mind more'n anything! You know, I was afraid he'd been with one of those bad women. Well, turns out there wasn't any Hedda. She was just out of those books he's been reading. He swears he's never known a Hedda in his life. And I believe him. Why, he seemed disgusted with me for having such a notion. [Then lamely.] So somehow—I can't kind of feel it's all as bad as I thought it was. [Then quickly and indignantly.] But it's bad enough, goodness knows—The idea of a boy of his age! Shall I go up now and tell him to get dressed, you want to see him?

Miller. [Helplessly—and irritably.] Yes! I can't waste all day listening to you—

Mrs. Miller. [Worriedly.] Now you keep your temper, Nat, remember!

[She goes out.]

Miller. Darn women, anyway! They always get you mixed up. Their minds simply don't know what logic is! [Then he notices that Sid is dozing. Sharply.] Sid!

Sid. [Blinking—mechanically.] I'll take the same. [Then hurriedly.] What'd you say, Nat?

Miller. [Caustically.] What I didn't say was "what'll you have." [Then irritably.] Do you want to be of some help, or don't you? Then keep awake and try and use your brains! This is a damned sight more serious than Essie has any idea! She thinks there weren't any girls mixed up with Richard's spree last night—but I happen to know there were! [He takes a letter from his pocket.] Here's a note a woman left with one of the boys downstairs at the office this morning—didn't ask to see me, just said give me this. He'd never seen her before—said she looked like a tart. [He has opened the letter and reads.] "Your son got the booze he drank last night at the Pleasant Beach House. The bartender there knew he was under age but served him just the same. He thought it was a good joke to get him soused. If you have any guts you will run that bastard out of town." Well, what do you think of that? It's a woman's handwriting—not signed, of course.

Sid. She's one of the babies, all right—judging from her elegant language.

Miller. [Handing him the letter.] See if you recognize the handwriting.

Sid. [With a reproachful look.] Nat, I resent the implication that I correspond with all the tramps around this town. [Then,

looking at the letter.] No, I don't know who this could be. [*Handing the letter back.*] But I deduce that the lady had a run-in with the barkeep and wants revenge.

Miller. [*Grimly.*] And I deduce that before that she must have picked up Richard—or how would she know who he was?—and took him to this dive.

Sid. Maybe. The Pleasant Beach House is nothing but a bed house— [*Quickly.*] At least, so I've been told.

Miller. That's just the sort of damned fool thing he might do to spite Muriel, in the state of mind he was in—pick up some tart. And she'd try to get him drunk so—

Sid. Yes it might have happened like that—and it might not. How're we ever going to prove it? Every one at the Pleasant Beach will lie their heads off.

Miller. [*Simply and proudly.*] Richard won't lie.

Sid. Well, don't blame him if he don't remember everything that happened last night. [*Then sincerely concerned.*] I hope you're wrong, Nat. That kind of baby is dangerous for a kid like Dick—in more ways than one. You know what I mean.

Miller. [*Frowningly.*] Yep—and that's just what's got me worried. Damn it, I've got to have a straight talk with him—about women and all those things. I ought to have long ago.

Sid. Yes. You ought.

Miller. I've tried a couple of times—but, hell, I always get sort of ashamed of myself and can't get started right. You feel, in spite of all his bold talk out of books, that he's so darned innocent inside.

Sid. I know. I wouldn't like the job. [*Then after a pause—curiously.*] How were you figuring to punish him for his sins?

Miller. [*Frowning.*] To be honest with you, Sid, I'm damned if I know. It all depends on what I feel about what he feels when I first size him up—and even then it'll be like shooting in the dark.

Sid. If I didn't know you so well, I'd say don't be too hard on him. [*He smiles a little bitterly.*] If you remember, I was always getting punished—and see what a lot of good it did me!

Miller. [*Kindly.*] Oh, there's lots worse than you around, so don't take to boasting. [*Then at a sound from the front parlor—with a sigh.*] Well, here comes the bad man, I guess.

Sid. [*Getting up.*] I'll beat it.

[*But it is MRS. MILLER who appears, looking guilty and defensive. SID sits down again.*]

Mrs. Miller. I'm sorry, Nat—but he was

sound asleep and I didn't have the heart to wake him.

Miller. [*Concealing a relief of which he is ashamed—exasperatedly.*] Well, I'll be double damned! If you're not the—

Mrs. Miller. [*Defensively aggressive.*] Now don't lose your temper at me, Nat Miller. You know as well as I do he needs all the sleep he can get today—after last night's ructions! Do you want him to be taken down sick? You can see him when you come home for supper, can't you? My goodness, you'd think you couldn't bear waiting to punish him!

Miller. [*Outraged.*] Well, I'll be eternally— [*Then suddenly he laughs.*] No use talking, you certainly take the cake! But you know darned well I told you I'm not coming home to supper tonight. I've got a date with Jack Lawson that may mean a lot of new advertising and it's important.

Mrs. Miller. Then you can see him when you do come home.

Miller. [*Covering his evident relief at this respite with a fuming manner.*] All right! All right! I give up! I'm going back to the office. [*He starts for the front parlor.*] Bring a man all the way back here on a busy day and then you— No consideration—

[*He disappears, and a moment later the front door is heard shutting behind him.*]

Mrs. Miller. Well! I never saw Nat so bad-tempered!

Sid. [*With a chuckle.*] He's so tickled to get out of it for a while he can't see straight!

Mrs. Miller. [*With a sniff.*] I hope I know him better than you. [*Then fussing about the room, setting this and that in place, while SID yawns drowsily and blinks his eyes.*] And there was Richard sleeping like a baby—so innocent-looking! You'd think butter wouldn't melt in his mouth! It all goes to show you never can tell by appearances—not even when it's your own child. The idea!

Sid. [*Drowsily.*] Oh, Dick's all right, Essie. Stop worrying.

Mrs. Miller. [*With a sniff.*] Of course, you'd say that. I suppose you'll have him out with you painting the town red the next thing!

[*As she is talking, RICHARD appears in the doorway. He shows no ill effects from his experience the night before. In fact, he looks surprisingly healthy. He is dressed in flannel undershirt, trousers, shoes, covered by heavy brown bathrobe. His expression is one of hang-dog guilt mingled with defensive defiance.*]

Richard. [*With self-conscious unconcern, ignoring his MOTHER.*] Hello, Uncle Sid.

Mrs. Miller. [*Whirls on him.*] What are you doing here, young man? I thought you were asleep! Seems to me you woke up pretty quick—just after your Pa left the house!

Richard. [*Sulkily.*] I wasn't asleep.

Mrs. Miller. [*Outraged.*] Do you mean to say you were deliberately deceiving?

Richard. I wasn't deceiving— You didn't ask if I was asleep.

Mrs. Miller. It amounts to the same thing and you know it! It isn't enough your wickedness last night, but now you have to take to lying!

Richard. I wasn't lying, Ma. If you'd asked if I was asleep I'd have said no.

Mrs. Miller. I've a good mind to send you straight back to bed and make you stay there!

Richard. Ah, what for, Ma? It was only giving me a headache, lying there.

Mrs. Miller. If you've got a headache, I guess you know it doesn't come from that! And imagine me standing there, and feeling sorry for you, like a fool— But you wait till your Pa comes back tonight. If you don't catch it—

Richard. [*Sulkily.*] I don't care.

Mrs. Miller. You don't care? You talk as if you weren't sorry for what you did last night!

Richard. [*Defiantly.*] I'm not sorry.

Mrs. Miller. Richard.

Richard. [*With bitter despondency.*] I'm not sorry because I don't care a darn what I did, or anything about anything! But I won't do it again—

Mrs. Miller. [*Seizing on this to relent a bit.*] Well, I'm glad to hear you say that, anyway!

Richard. But that's not because I think it was wicked or any such old-fogey moral notion, but because it wasn't any fun. It didn't make me happy and funny like it does Uncle Sid—

Sid. [*Drowsily.*] What's that? Who's funny?

Richard. [*Ignoring him.*] It only made me sadder—and sick—so I don't see any sense in it.

Mrs. Miller. Now you're talking sense! That's a good boy.

Richard. But I'm not sorry I tried it once—"curing the soul by means of the senses," as Oscar Wilde says. [*Then with despairing pessimism.*] But what does it matter what I do or don't do? Life is all a stupid farce! I'm through with it! [*With a sinister smile.*] It's lucky there aren't any of General Gabler's pistols around—or you'd see if I'd stand it much longer!

Mrs. Miller. [*Worriedly impressed by this threat—but pretending scorn.*] I don't know anything about General Gabler—I suppose that's more of those darned books—but you're a silly gabbler yourself when you talk that way!

Richard. [*Darkly.*] That's how little you know about me.

Mrs. Miller. [*Giving in to her worry.*] I wish you wouldn't say those terrible things—about life and pistols! You don't want to worry me to death, do you?

Richard. [*Reassuringly stoical now.*] You needn't worry, Ma. It was only my despair talking. But I'm not a coward. I'll face—my fate.

Mrs. Miller. [*Stands looking at him puzzledly—then gives it up with a sigh.*] Well, all I can say is you're the queerest boy I ever did hear of! [*Then solicitously, putting her hand on his forehead.*] How's your headache? Do you want me to get you some Bromo Seltzer?

Richard. [*Taken down—disgustedly.*] No, I don't! Aw, Ma, you don't understand anything!

Mrs. Miller. [*Practically.*] Well, I understand this much: It's your liver, that's what! You'll take a good dose of salts tomorrow morning, and no nonsense about it! [*Then suddenly.*] My goodness, I wonder what time it's getting to be. I've got to go up-street. [*She goes to the doorway as she speaks.*] You stay here, Richard, you hear? Remember you're not allowed out today—for a punishment.

[*She hurries away. RICHARD is sitting in tragic gloom. SID, without opening his eyes, speaks to him drowsily.*]

Sid. Well, how's my fellow Rum Pot? Got a head?

Richard. [*Startled—sheepishly.*] Aw, don't go dragging that up, Uncle Sid. I'm never going to be such a fool again, I tell you.

Sid. [*With drowsy cynicism—not unmixed with bitterness at the end.*] Never again, eh? Seems to me I've heard someone say that before. Who could it have been, I wonder? Why, if it wasn't Sid Davis! Yes, sir, I've heard him say that very thing a thousand times, must be. But then he's always fooling; you can't take a word he says seriously; he's a card, that Sid is!

Richard. [*Darkly.*] I was desperate, Uncle—even if she wasn't worth it. I was wounded to the heart.

Sid. I like "to the quick" better myself—more stylish! [*Then sadly.*] But you're right. Love is hell on a poor sucker. Don't I know it?

[SID's chin sinks on his chest and he begins to breathe noisily, fast asleep. There is a sound of someone on the porch and the screen door is opened and MILDRED enters. She smiles on seeing her UNCLE, then gives a start on seeing RICHARD.]

Mildred. Hello! Are you allowed up?

Richard. Of course, I'm allowed up.

Mildred. How did Pa punish you?

Richard. He didn't. He went back to the office without seeing me.

Mildred. Well, you'll catch it later. [Then rebukingly.] And you ought to. If you'd ever seen how awful you looked last night!

Richard. Aw, forget it, can't you?

Mildred. Well, are you ever going to do it again, that's what I want to know.

Richard. What's that to you?

Mildred. [With suppressed excitement.] Well, if you don't solemnly swear you won't—then I won't give you something I've got for you.

Richard. Don't try to kid me. You haven't got anything.

Mildred. I have, too.

Richard. What?

Mildred. Wouldn't you like to know! I'll give you three guesses.

Richard. Don't bother me. I'm in no mood to play riddles with kids!

Mildred. Oh, well, if you're going to get snippy! Anyway, you haven't promised yet.

Richard. [A prey to keen curiosity now.] I promise. What is it?

Mildred. What would you like best in the world?

Richard. I don't know. What?

Mildred. And you pretend to be in love! If I told Muriel that!

Richard. [Breathlessly.] Is it—from her?

Mildred. [Laughing.] Well, I guess it's a shame to keep you guessing. Yes. It is from her. I was walking past her place just now when I saw her waving from their parlor window, and I went up and she said "give this to Dick," and she didn't have a chance to say anything else because her mother called her and said she wasn't allowed to have company. So I took it—and here it is. [She gives him a letter folded many times into a tiny square. RICHARD opens it with a trembling eagerness and reads. MILDRED watches him curiously—then sighs affectedly.] Gee, it must be wonderful to be in love like you are—all with one person.

Richard. [His eyes shining with joy.] Gee, Mid, do you know what she says—that

she didn't mean a word in that other letter. Her old man made her write it. And she loves me and only me and always will, no matter how they punish her!

Mildred. My! I'd never think she had that much spunk.

Richard. Huh! You don't know her! Think I could fall in love with a girl that was afraid to say her soul's her own? I should say not! [Then more gleefully still.] And she's going to try and sneak out and meet me tonight. She says she thinks she can do it. [Then suddenly, feeling this enthusiasm before MILDRED is entirely the wrong note for a cynical pessimist—with an affected bitter laugh.] Ha! I knew darned well she couldn't hold out—that she'd ask me again. [He misquotes cynically.] "Women never know when the curtain has fallen. They always want another act." ¹

Mildred. Is that so, smarty?

Richard. [As if he were weighing the matter.] I don't know whether I'll consent to keep this date or not.

Mildred. Well, I know! You're not allowed out, you silly! So you can't!

Richard. [Dropping all pretenses—defiantly.] Can't I, though! You wait and see if I can't! I'll see her tonight if it's the last thing I ever do! I don't care how I'm punished after!

Mildred. [Admiringly.] Goodness! I never thought you had such nerve!

Richard. You promise to keep your face shut, Mid—until after I've left tonight—then you can tell Pa and Ma where I've gone—I mean, if they're worrying I'm off like last night.

Mildred. All right. Only you've got to do something for me when I ask.

Richard. Course I will. [Excitedly.] And say, Mid, right now's the best chance for me to get away—while everyone's out. Ma'll be coming back soon and she'll keep watching me like a cat. [Starts for door.] I'm going now—I'll beat it upstairs and get dressed.

Mildred. But what will you do till night time—it's ages to wait?

Richard. What do I care how long I wait! [With passionate intensity.] I'd wait a million years and never mind it—for her! [To MILDRED, with superior scornful look.] The trouble with you is—you don't understand what love means. [He exits.]

¹ From Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Wilde wrote "a sixth" instead of "another."

ACT FOUR

SCENE II

SCENE: *A strip of beach along the harbor.*

At right, a bank of dark earth, running half-diagonally back along the beach, rises abruptly like a step a foot high marking the line where the sand of the beach ends and fertile land begins. The top of the bank is grassy and the trailing boughs of willow trees extend out over it and over a part of the beach. At right center is a path leading up the bank, between the willows. On the beach, at just left of center, a white, flat-bottomed rowboat is drawn up, its bow about touching the bank, the painter trailing up the bank, evidently made fast to the trunk of a willow. The new moon casts a soft, mysterious, caressing light over everything. The last of the path is in very pale moonlight which increases toward the boat, which is the high spot of the moonlight. The sand of the beach shimmers palely. In the distance, the orchestra of a summer hotel can be heard very faintly at intervals.

[Richard is discovered sitting sideways on the gunwale of the rowboat near the stern. He is facing right, watching the path. He is in a great nervous state of anxious expectancy, squirming about uncomfortably on the narrow gunwale, kicking at the sand restlessly, twirling his straw hat, with a bright-colored band in stripes, around on his finger.]

Richard. [Thinking aloud.] Gosh, that music from the hotel sounds wonderful. Must be nearly nine—I can hear the Town Hall clock strike, it's so still to-night—I'll catch hell when I get back, but it'll be worth it. If only Muriel turns up—Am I sure she wrote nine? *[He puts the straw hat on the sand right of boat and pulls the folded letter out of his pocket and peers at it in the moonlight.]* Yes, it's nine, all right. *[He starts to put the note back in his pocket, then stops and kisses it—then shoves it away hastily, sheepishly, looking around him shamefacedly, as if afraid he were being observed.]* Aw, that's silly—no, it isn't either—not when you're really in love—*[He jumps to his feet restlessly.]* Darn it, I wish she'd show up!—think of something else—that'll make the time pass quicker—*[Sits again on boat.]* Last

night?—the Pleasant Beach House—Belle—ah, forget her!—now, when Muriel's coming—that's a fine time to think of—! But I didn't go upstairs with her—even if she was pretty—Aw, she wasn't pretty—She was just a whore—She was everything dirty—Muriel's a million times prettier, anyway—Muriel and I will go upstairs—when we're married—but that will be beautiful—But I oughtn't even to think of that yet—it's not right—I'd never—now—but after we're married—*[He gives a little shiver of passionate longing—then resolutely turns his mind away from these improper, almost desecrating thoughts.]* That damned barkeep kicking me—I'll bet you if I hadn't been drunk I'd have given him one good punch in the nose—*[Then with a shiver of shamefaced revulsion and self-disgust.]* Aw, you deserved a kick in the pants—making such a darned slob of yourself! You must have been a fine sight when you got home!—having to be put to bed and getting sick! Phaw! *[He squirms disgustedly.]* Think of something else, can't you? Recite something—See if you remember—

"Nay, let us walk from fire unto fire,
From passionate pain to deadlier delight,
I am too young to live without desire,
Too young art thou to waste this summer night—" ¹

Gee, that's a peach! I'll have to memorize the rest and recite it to Muriel the next time—I wish I could write poetry—about her and me—*[He sighs and stares around him at the night.]* Gee, it's beautiful to-night—as if it was a special night—for me and Muriel—Gee, I love tonight—I love the sand, and the trees, and the grass, and the water, and the sky, and the moon—It's all in me and I'm in it—God, it's so beautiful! *[He stares at the moon with a rapt face. From the distance the Town Hall clock begins to strike. It brings him back to earth with a start.]* There's nine now—*[He peers at the path apprehensively.]* I don't see her—She must have got caught. *[Almost tearfully.]* Gee, I hate to go home and catch hell—without having seen her! *[Then calling a manly cynicism to his aid.]* Aw, who ever heard of a woman being on time—I ought to know enough about life by this time not to expect—*[Then, with sudden excitement.]*

¹ From Wilde's *Panthea*.

There she comes now— Gosh! [*He heaves a sigh of relief—then recites dramatically to himself, his eyes on the approaching figure.*]

"And lo, my love, mine own soul's heart,
more dear

Than mine own soul, more beautiful than
God,

Who hath my being between the hands of
her——¹

[*Then hastily.*] Mustn't let her know I'm
so tickled— If women are too sure of you,
they treat you like slaves. Let her suffer for
a change——

[*He strolls around with exaggerated carelessness, turning his back on the path, hands in pockets, whistling with insouciance "Waiting at the Church."*]
MURIEL MCCOMBER enters from down the path. She is fifteen, going on sixteen. She is a pretty girl with a plump, graceful little figure, fluffy, light-brown hair, big naive wondering dark eyes, a round dimpled face, a soft melting drawly voice. Just now she is in a great thrilled state of timid adventurousness. She hesitates in the shadow at the foot of the path, waiting for RICHARD to see her, but he resolutely goes on whistling with back turned, and she has to call him.]

Muriel. Oh, Dick.

Richard. [*Turns around with an elaborate simulation of being disturbed in the midst of profound meditation.*] Oh, hello. Is it nine already?

Muriel. [*Coming toward him as far as the edge of the shadow—disappointedly.*] I thought you'd be waiting right here at the end of the path. I'll bet you'd forgotten I was even coming.

Richard. [*Strolling a little toward her but not too far—carelessly.*] No, I hadn't forgotten, honest. But I got to thinking about life.

Muriel. You might think of me for a change. [*Hesitating timidly on the edge of the shadow.*] Dick! You come here to me. I'm afraid to go out there where anyone might see me.

Richard. [*Coming toward her—scornfully.*] Aw, there you go again—always scared of life!

Muriel. [*Indignantly.*] Dick Miller, I do think you've got an awful nerve to say that after all the risks I've run making this date and then sneaking out! You didn't take the trouble to sneak any letter to me, I notice!

Richard. No, because after your first letter, I thought everything was dead and past between us.

Muriel. And I'll bet you didn't care one little bit! [*On the verge of humiliated tears.*] Oh, I was a fool ever to come here! I've got a good notion to go right home and never speak to you again!

[*She half turns back toward the path.*]

Richard. [*Frightened—immediately becomes terribly sincere—grabbing her by the shoulders.*] Aw, don't go, Muriel! Please! I didn't mean anything like that, honest I didn't! Gee, if you knew how broken-hearted I was by that first letter, and how darned happy your second letter made me——!

Muriel. [*Happily relieved—but appreciates she has the upper hand now and doesn't relent at once.*] I don't believe you!

Richard. You ask Mid how happy I was. She can prove it.

Muriel. She'd say anything you told her to. I don't care anything about what she'd say. It's you. You've got to swear to me.

Richard. I swear!

Muriel. [*Demurely.*] Well, then, all right, I'll believe you.

Richard. [*His eyes on her face lovingly—genuine adoration in his voice.*] Gosh, you're pretty tonight, Muriel! It seems ages since we've been together. If you knew how I've suffered——!

Muriel. I did, too.

Richard. [*Unable to resist falling into his tragic literary pose for a moment.*] The despair in my soul—— [*He recites dramatically.*] "Something was dead in each of us, And what was dead was Hope!"¹ That was me! My hope of happiness was dead! [*Then with sincere boyish fervor.*] Gosh, Muriel, it sure is wonderful to be with you again!

[*He puts a timid hand on her shoulder, awkwardly.*]

Muriel. [*Shyly.*] I'm glad—it makes you happy. I'm happy, too.

Richard. Can't I—won't you let me kiss you—now? Please!

[*He bends his face toward hers.*]

Muriel. [*Ducking her head away—timidly.*] No! You mustn't. Don't——

Richard. Aw, why can't I?

Muriel. Because—I'm afraid.

Richard. [*Discomfited—taking his arm from around her—a bit sulky and impatient with her.*] Aw, that's what you always say!

¹ From Swinburne's *Laus Veneris*.

¹ From Wilde's *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*.

You're always so afraid! Aren't you ever going to let me?

Muriel. I will—sometime.

Richard. When?

Muriel. Soon, maybe.

Richard. Tonight, will you?

Muriel. [Coily.] I'll see.

Richard. Promise?

Muriel. I promise—maybe.

Richard. All right. You remember you've promised. [Then coaxingly.] Aw, don't let's stand here. Come on out and we can sit down in the boat.

Muriel. [Hesitantly.] It's so bright out there.

Richard. No one'll see. You know there's never anyone around here at night.

Muriel. [Illogically.] I know there isn't. That's why I thought it would be the best place. But there might be someone.

Richard. [Taking her hand and tugging at it gently.] There isn't a soul. [MURIEL steps out a little and looks up and down fearfully. RICHARD goes on insistently.] Aw, what's the use of a moon if you can't see it?

Muriel. But it's only a new moon. That's not much to look at.

Richard. But I want to see you. I can't here in the shadow. I want to—drink in—all your beauty.

Muriel. [Can't resist this.] Well, all right— [She lets him lead her toward the boat. They sit on the left end.] Only I can't stay only a few minutes.

Richard. [Pleadingly.] Aw, you can stay a little while, can't you? Please!

Muriel. A little while. But I've got to be home in bed again pretending to be asleep by ten o'clock.

Richard. But you'll have lots of time to do that.

Muriel. [Excitedly.] Dick, you have no idea what I went through to get here tonight! My, but it was exciting! I had to get all undressed and into bed and Ma came up, and I pretended to be asleep, and she went down again, and I got up and dressed in such a hurry— I must look a sight, don't I?

Richard. You do not. You look wonderful.

Muriel. And then I sneaked down the back stairs. And the pesky old stairs squeaked, and my heart was in my mouth, I was so scared, and then I sneaked out through the back yard, keeping in the dark under the trees, and— My, but it was exciting! Dick, you don't realize how I've been punished for your sake.

Richard. And you don't realize what I've been through for you—and what I'm in for

—for sneaking out tonight—and staying away all day— [Then darkly.] And for what I did last night—what your letter made me do!

Muriel. [Made terribly curious by his ominous tone.] What did my letter make you do?

Richard. [Beginning to glory in this.] It's too long a story—and let the dead past bury its dead. [Then with real feeling.] Only it isn't past, I can tell you! What I'll catch when Pa gets hold of me!

Muriel. Tell me, Dick! Begin at the beginning and tell me!

Richard. [Tragically.] Well, after your old—your father left our place I caught holy hell from Pa.

Muriel. Dick! You mustn't swear!

Richard. [Darkly.] Hell is the only word that can describe it. And on top of that, to torture me more, he gave me your letter. After I'd read that I didn't want to live any more. Life seemed like a tragic farce.

Muriel. [Touched.] I'm so awful sorry, Dick—honest I am! But you might have known I'd never write that unless—

Richard. I thought your love for me was dead. I wanted to die. I sat and brooded about death. Finally I made up my mind I'd kill myself.

Muriel. [Excitedly.] Dick! You didn't!

Richard. I did, too! If there'd been one of Hedda Gabler's pistols around, you'd have seen if I wouldn't have done it beautifully. I thought, "When I'm dead, she'll be sorry she ruined my life!"

Muriel. [Cuddling up a little to him.] If you ever had! I'd have died, too! Honest, I would!

Richard. But suicide is the act of a coward. [Then with a bitter change of tone.] And anyway, I thought to myself, she isn't worth it!

Muriel. [Huffily.] That's a nice thing to say!

Richard. Well, if you meant what was in that letter you wouldn't have been worth it, would you?

Muriel. But I've told you, Pa—

Richard. So I said to myself, "I'm through with women; they're all alike—"

Muriel. I'm not.

Richard. And I thought, "What difference does it make what I do now; I might as well forget her and lead the pace that kills, and drown my sorrows!" You know, I had eleven dollars saved up to buy you something for your birthday, but I thought: "She's dead to me now and why shouldn't I throw it away?" [Then hastily.] I've still got almost

five left, Muriel, and I can get you something nice with that.

Muriel. [*Excitedly.*] What do I care about your old presents? You tell me what you did!

Richard. [*Darkly again.*] After it was dark, I sneaked out and went to a low dive I know about.

Muriel. Dick Miller, I don't believe you ever—

Richard. You ask them at the Pleasant Beach House if I didn't! They won't forget me in a hurry!

Muriel. [*Impressed and horrified.*] Why, that's a terrible place! Pa says it ought to be closed by the police!

Richard. [*Darkly.*] I said it was a dive, didn't I? It's a "secret house of shame." And they let me into a secret room behind the barroom. There wasn't anyone there but a Princeton Senior I know—he belongs to Tiger Inn and he's fullback on the football team—and he had two chorus girls from New York with him, and they were all drinking champagne.

Muriel. [*Disturbed by the entrance of the chorus girls.*] Dick Miller! I hope you didn't notice—

Richard. [*Carelessly.*] I noticed one of the girls—the one that wasn't with him—looking at me. She had strange-looking eyes. And then she asked me if I wouldn't drink champagne with them and come and sit with her.

Muriel. She must have been a nice thing! [*Then a bit falteringly.*] And—did you?

Richard. [*With tragic bitterness.*] Why shouldn't I, when you'd told me in that letter you'd never see me again?

Muriel. [*Almost tearfully.*] But you ought to have known Pa made me—

Richard. I didn't know that then. [*Then rubbing it in.*] Her name was Belle. She had golden hair—the kind that burns and stings you.

Muriel. I'll bet it was dyed!

Richard. She kept smoking one cigarette after another—but that's nothing for a chorus girl.

Muriel. [*Indignantly.*] She was low and bad; that's what she was or she couldn't be a chorus girl; and her smoking cigarettes proves it! [*Then falteringly again.*] And then what happened?

Richard. [*Carelessly.*] Oh, we just kept drinking champagne—and then I had a fight with the barkeep and knocked him down because he'd insulted her.

Muriel. [*Huffily.*] I don't see how he could insult that kind! And why did you

fight for her? Why didn't the Princeton fullback—

Richard. [*Slightly hesitant.*] He was too drunk by that time.

Muriel. And were you drunk?

Richard. Only a little then. I was worse later. You ought to have seen me when I got home! I was on the verge of delirium tremens!

Muriel. I'm glad I didn't see you. I hate people who get drunk! I'd have hated you! [*Then faltering but fascinated.*] But what happened with that Belle—after—before you went home?

Richard. Oh, we kept drinking champagne and she came and sat on my lap and kissed me.

Muriel. [*Stiffening.*] Oh!

Richard. [*Quickly, afraid he has gone too far.*] But it was only all in fun.

Muriel. And did you kiss her?

Richard. No, I didn't.

Muriel. [*Distractedly.*] You did, too! You're lying and you know it. [*Then tearfully.*] And there I was, right at that time, lying in bed not able to sleep, wondering how I was ever going to see you again and crying my eyes out, while you—! [*She suddenly jumps to her feet in a tearful fury.*] I hate you! I wish you were dead! I never want to lay eyes on you again! And this time I mean it!

[*She tries to leave but he holds her back. All the pose has dropped from him now and he is in a terrible state of contrition and fear of losing her.*]

Richard. [*Imploringly.*] Muriel! Wait! Listen!

Muriel. I don't want to listen! Let me go! If you don't I'll bite your hand!

Richard. I won't let you go! You've got to let me explain! I never—! Ouch! [*For MURIEL has bitten his hand and it hurts, and, stung by the pain, he lets go instinctively. She immediately starts running toward the path. RICHARD calls after her with bitter despair and hurt.*] All right! Go if you want to—if you haven't the decency to let me explain. I hate you, too! I'll go and see Belle!

Muriel. [*Stops at foot of the path, then turns on him.*] Well, go and see her—if that's the kind of girl you like! What do I care? [*Then as he only stares before him broodingly, sitting dejectedly in the stern of the boat, a pathetic figure of injured grief—she drifts a step toward him.*] You can't explain! What can you explain! You owned up you kissed her!

Richard. I did not. I said she kissed me.

Muriel. [Scornfully.] And I suppose you just sat and let yourself be kissed! Tell that to the Marines!

Richard. [Injuredly.] All right! If you're going to call me a liar every word I say—

Muriel. [Drifting back another step.] I didn't call you a liar. I only meant—it sounds fishy. Don't you know it does?

Richard. I don't know anything. I only know I wish I was dead!

Muriel. [Gently reproving.] You oughtn't to say that. It's wicked. *[Then after a pause.]* And I suppose you'll tell me you didn't fall in love with her?

Richard. [Scornfully.] I should say not! Fall in love with that kind of girl! What do you take me for?

Muriel. [Practically.] How do you know what you did if you drank so much champagne?

Richard. I kept my head—with her. I'm not a sucker, no matter what you think!

Muriel. [Drifting nearer.] Then you didn't—love her?

Richard. I hated her! She wasn't even pretty! And I had a fight with her before I left, she got so fresh. I told her I loved you and never could love anyone else, and for her to leave me alone.

Muriel. But you said just now you were going to see her—

Richard. That was only bluff. I wouldn't—unless you left me. Then I wouldn't care what I did—any more than I did last night. *[Then suddenly defiant.]* And what if I did kiss her once or twice? I only did it to get back at you!

Muriel. Dick!

Richard. You're a fine one to blame me—when it was all your fault! Didn't I think you were out of my life forever? Hadn't you written me you were? Answer me that!

Muriel. But I've told you a million times that Pa—

Richard. Why didn't you have more sense than to let him make you write it? Was it my fault you didn't?

Muriel. It was your fault for being so stupid! You ought to have known he stood right over me and told me each word to write. If I'd refused, it would only have made everything worse. I had to pretend, so I'd get a chance to see you. Don't you see, Silly? And I had sand enough to sneak out to meet you tonight, didn't I? *[He doesn't answer. She moves nearer.]* Still, I can see how you felt the way you did—and maybe I am to blame for that. So I'll forgive and forget, Dick—if you'll swear to me you didn't even think of loving that—

Richard. [Eagerly.] I didn't! I swear, Muriel. I couldn't. I love you!

Muriel. Well, then—I still love you.

Richard. Then come back here, why don't you?

Muriel. [Comes back and sits down by him shyly.] All right—only I'll have to go soon, Dick. *[He puts his arm around her waist. She cuddles up close to him.]* I'm sorry—I hurt your hand.

Richard. That was nothing. It felt wonderful even to have you bite.

Muriel. [Impulsively she kisses his hand.] There! That'll cure it.

[She is overcome by confusion at her boldness.]

Richard. You shouldn't—waste that—on my hand. *[Then tremblingly.]* You said—you'd let me—

Muriel. Will it wash off—her kisses—make you forget you ever—for always?

Richard. I should say so! I'd never remember anything but it—never want anything but it—ever again.

Muriel. [Shyly lifting her lips.] Then—all right—Dick. *[He kisses her tremblingly and for a moment their lips remain together. Then she lets her head sink on his shoulder and sighs softly.]* The moon is beautiful, isn't it?

Richard. [Kissing her hair.] Not as beautiful as you. Nothing is! *[Then after a pause.]* Won't it be wonderful when we're married?

Muriel. Yes—but it's so long to wait.

Richard. Perhaps I needn't go to Yale. Perhaps Pa will give me a job. Then I'd soon be making enough to—

Muriel. You better do what your Pa thinks best—and I'd like you to be at Yale. *[Then taking his hand.]* Poor you! Do you think he'll punish you awful?

Richard. [With intense sincerity.] I don't know and I don't care! Nothing would have kept me from seeing you tonight—not if I'd have to crawl over red-hot coals! *[Then falling back on Swinburne.]* You are "my love, mine own soul's heart, more dear than mine own soul, more beautiful than God!"

Muriel. [Shocked and delighted.] Sssh! It's wrong to say that!

Richard. [Adoringly.] Gosh, but I love you! Gosh, I love you—Darling!

Muriel. I love you, too—Sweetheart! *[They kiss. Then she lets her head sink on his shoulder again and they both sit in rapt trance, staring at the moon. After a pause—dreamily.]* Where'll we go on our honeymoon, Dick? To Niagara Falls?

Richard. [Scornfully.] That dump where

all the silly fools go? I should say not! [*With passionate romanticism.*] No, we'll go to some far-off wonderful place! [*He calls on Kipling to help him.*] Somewhere out on the Long Trail—the trail that is always

new— On the road to Mandalay! We'll watch the dawn come up like thunder out of China!

Muriel. [*Hazily but happily.*] That'll be wonderful, won't it?

CURTAIN

ACT FOUR

SCENE III

SCENE: *The sitting-room of the Miller house again—around ten o'clock the same night.*

[*MILLER is sitting in his rocker at right, his WIFE in her rocker at left. Moonlight shines faintly through the screen door up left. Only the green-shaded reading lamp is lit and by its light, MILLER, his specs on, is reading a book while his WIFE, sewing basket in lap, is working industriously on a doily. MRS. MILLER's face wears an expression of unworried content. MILLER's face has also lost its look of harassed preoccupation, although he still is a prey to certain misgivings, when he allows himself to think of them. Several books are piled on the table by his elbow, the books that have been confiscated from RICHARD.*]

Miller. [*Chuckles at something he reads—then closes the book and puts it on the table. MRS. MILLER looks up from her sewing.*] This Shaw's a comical cuss—even if his ideas are so crazy they oughtn't to allow them to be printed. And that Swinburne's got a fine swing to his poetry—if he'd only choose some other subjects besides loose women.

Mrs. Miller. [*Smiling teasingly.*] I can see where you're becoming corrupted by those books, too—pretending to read them out of duty to Richard, when your nose has been glued to the page!

Miller. No, no—but I've got to be honest. There's something to them. That "Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam," now. I read that over again and liked it even better than I had before—

Mrs. Miller. [*Has been busy with her own thoughts during this last—with a deep sigh of relief.*] My, but I'm glad Mildred told me where Richard's gone. I'd have worried my heart out if she hadn't. But now it's all right.

Miller. [*Frowning a little.*] I'd hardly go so far as to say that. Just because we know he's all right tonight doesn't mean last night is wiped out. He's still got to be punished for that.

Mrs. Miller. [*Defensively.*] Well, if you ask me, I think after the way I punished him all day, and the way I know he's punished himself, he's had about all he deserves. I've told you how sorry he was, and how he said he'd never touch liquor again. He hated the taste of it, and it didn't make him feel happy like Sid, but only sad and sick, so he didn't see anything in it for him.

Miller. Well, if he's really got that view of it driven into his skull, I don't know but I'm glad it all happened. That'll protect him more than a thousand lectures—just horse sense about himself. [*Then frowning again.*] Still, I can't let him do such things and go scot-free. And then, besides, there's another side to it— [*He stops abruptly.*]

Mrs. Miller. [*Uneasily.*] What do you mean, another side?

Miller. [*Hastily.*] I mean discipline. There's got to be some discipline in a family. I don't want him to get the idea he's got a stuffed shirt at the head of the table. No, he's got to be punished, if only to make the lesson stick in his mind, and I'm going to tell him he can't go to Yale, seeing he's so undependable.

Mrs. Miller. [*Up in arms at once.*] Not go to Yale! I guess he can go to Yale! Every man of your means in town is sending his boys to college! What would folks think of you? You let Wilbur go, and you'd have let Lawrence, only he didn't want to, and you're letting Arthur! If our other children can get the benefit of a college education, you're not going to pick on Richard—

Miller. Hush up, for God's sake! If you'd let me finish, I said I'd tell him that now—bluff—then later on I'll change my mind, if he behaves himself.

Mrs. Miller. Oh, well, if that's all— [*Then defensively again.*] But it's your duty

to give him every benefit. He's got an exceptional brain, that boy has! He's proved it by the way he likes to read all those deep plays and poetry.

Miller. But I thought you——

[*He stops abruptly, grinning helplessly.*]

Mrs. Miller. You thought I what?

Miller. Never mind.

Mrs. Miller. [*Sniffs, but thinks it better to let this pass.*] You mark my words, that boy's going to turn out to be a great lawyer, or a great doctor, or a great writer, or——

Miller. [*Grinning.*] You agree he's going to be great, anyway.

Mrs. Miller. Yes, I most certainly have a lot of faith in Richard.

Miller. Well, so have I, as far as that goes.

Mrs. Miller. And as for his being in love with Muriel! I don't see but what it might work out real well. Richard could do worse.

Miller. But I thought you had no use for Muriel, thought she was stupid——

Mrs. Miller. Well, so I did, but if she's good for Richard and he wants her——

[*Then inconsequentially.*] Ma used to say you weren't over bright but she changed her mind when she saw I didn't care if you were or not.

Miller. [*Not exactly pleased by this.*] Well, I've been bright enough to——

Mrs. Miller. [*Going on as if he had not spoken.*] And Muriel's real cute-looking, I have to admit that. Takes after her mother. Alice Briggs was the prettiest girl before she married!

Miller. Yes, and Muriel will get big as a house after she's married, the same as her mother did. That's the trouble. A man never can tell what he's letting himself in——

[*He stops, feeling his WIFE's eyes fixed on him with indignant suspicion.*]

Mrs. Miller. [*Sharply.*] I'm not too fat and don't you say it!

Miller. Who was talking about you?

Mrs. Miller. And I'd rather have some flesh on my bones than be built like a string bean and bore a hole in a chair every time I sat down—like some people!

Miller. [*Ignoring the insult—flatteringly.*] Why, no one'd ever call you fat, Essie. You're only plump, like a good figure ought to be.

Mrs. Miller. [*Childishly pleased—gratefully giving tit for tat.*] Well, you're not skinny, either—only slender—and I think you've been putting on weight lately, too.

[*Having thus squared matters, she takes up her sewing again. A pause. Then MILLER asks incredulously.*]

Miller. You don't mean to tell me you're

actually taking this Muriel crush of Richard's seriously, do you? I know it's a good thing to encourage right now but—pshaw, why, Richard'll probably forget all about her before he's away six months and she'll have forgotten him.

Mrs. Miller. Don't be so cynical. [*Then, after a pause, thoughtfully.*] Well, anyway, he'll always have it to remember—no matter what happens after—and that's something.

Miller. You bet that's something. [*Then with a grin.*] You surprise me at times with your deep wisdom!

Mrs. Miller. You don't give me credit for ever having common sense, that's why.

[*She goes back to her sewing.*]

Miller. [*After a pause.*] Where'd you say Sid and Lily had gone off to?

Mrs. Miller. To the beach to listen to the band. [*She sighs sympathetically.*] Poor Lily! Sid'll never change, and she'll never marry him. But she seems to get some queer satisfaction out of fussing over him.

Miller. Arthur's up with Elsie Rand, I suppose?

Mrs. Miller. Of course.

Miller. Where's Mildred?

Mrs. Miller. Out walking with her latest. I've forgot who it is. I can't keep track of them. [*She smiles.*]

Miller. [*Smiling.*] Then, from all reports, we seem to be completely surrounded by love!

Mrs. Miller. Well, we've had our share, haven't we? We don't have to begrudge it to our children. [*Then has a sudden thought.*] But I've done all this talking about Muriel and Richard and clean forgot how wild old McComber was against it. But he'll get over that, I suppose.

Miller. [*With satisfaction.*] He has already. I ran into him upstreet this afternoon and he was meek as pie. He backed water and said he guessed I was right. Richard had just copied stuff out of books, and kids would be kids, and so on. So I came off my high horse a bit—but not too far—and I guess all that won't bother anyone any more. [*Then rubbing his hands together—with a boyish grin of pleasure.*] And I told you about getting that business from Lawson, didn't I? It's been a good day, Essie—a darned good day!

[*From off up left is heard the footsteps of someone coming around the piazza to the side door. MRS. MILLER looks up from her sewing, listening a moment.*]

Mrs. Miller. [*In a whisper.*] It's Richard.

Miller. [*Immediately assuming an expression of becoming gravity.*] Hmm.

[He takes off his spectacles and puts them back in their case and straightens himself in his chair. RICHARD comes slowly in. He walks like one in a trance, his eyes shining with a dreamy happiness, his spirit still too exalted to be conscious of his surroundings, or to remember the threatened punishment. He carries his straw hat dangling in his hand, quite unaware of its existence.]

Richard. [Dreamily, like a ghost addressing fellow shadows.] Hello.

Mrs. Miller. [Staring at him worriedly.] Hello, Richard.

Miller. [Sizing him up shrewdly.] Hello, Son.

[RICHARD moves past his MOTHER and comes to the far corner, right front, where the light is dimmest, and sits down on the sofa, and stares before him, his hat dangling in his hand.]

Mrs. Miller. [With frightened suspicion now.] Goodness, he acts queer! Nat, you don't suppose he's been—?

Miller. [With a reassuring smile.] No. It's love, not liquor, this time.

Mrs. Miller. [Only partly reassured—sharply.] Richard! What's the matter with you? [He comes to himself with a start. She goes on scoldingly.] How many times have I told you to hang up your hat in the hall when you come in! [He looks at his hat as if he were surprised at its existence.] Here, give it to me. I'll hang it up for you this once. And what are you sitting over here in the dark for? Don't forget your father's been waiting to talk to you!

[She comes back to the table and he follows her, still half in a dream, and stands by his FATHER'S chair. MRS. MILLER starts for the hall with his hat.]

Miller. [Quietly but firmly now.] You better leave Richard and me alone for a while, Essie.

Mrs. Miller. [Turns to stare at him apprehensively.] Well—all right—I'll go sit on the piazza. Call me if you want me. [Then a bit pleadingly.] But you'll remember all I've said, Nat, won't you?

[MILLER nods reassuringly. She disappears. RICHARD, keenly conscious of himself as the about-to-be-sentenced criminal by this time, looks guilty and a bit defiant, searches his FATHER'S expressionless face with uneasy side glances, and steels himself for what is coming.]

Miller. [Casually, indicating MRS. MILLER'S chair.] Sit down, Richard. [RICHARD slumps awkwardly into the chair and sits in

a self-conscious, unnatural position. MILLER sizes him up keenly—then suddenly smiles and asks with quiet mockery.] Well, how are the vine leaves in your hair this evening?

Richard. [Totally unprepared for this approach, shamefacedly mutters.] I don't know, Pa.

Miller. Turned out to be poison ivy, didn't they? [Then kindly.] But you needn't look so alarmed. I'm not going to read you any temperance lecture. That'd bore me more than it would you. And, in spite of your damn foolishness last night, I'm still giving you credit for having brains. So I'm pretty sure anything I could say to you you've already said to yourself.

Richard. [His head down—humbly.] I know I was a darned fool.

Miller. [Thinking it well to rub in this aspect—disgustedly.] You sure were—not only a fool but a downright, stupid, disgusting fool! [RICHARD squirms, his head still lower.] It was bad enough for you to let me and Arthur see you, but to appear like that before your mother and Mildred—! And I wonder if Muriel would think you were so fine if she ever saw you as you looked and acted then. I think she'd give you your walking papers for keeps. And you couldn't blame her. No nice girl wants to give her love to a stupid drunk!

Richard. [Writhing.] I know, Pa.

Miller. [After a pause—quietly.] All right. Then that settles the booze end of it. [He sizes RICHARD up searchingly—then suddenly speaks sharply.] But there is another thing that's more serious. How about that tart you went to bed with at the Pleasant Beach House?

Richard. [Flabbergasted—stammers.] You know? But I didn't! If they've told you about her down there, they must have told you I didn't! I gave her the five dollars just so she'd let me out of it. She made everything seem rotten and dirty—and—I didn't want to do a thing like that to Muriel—no matter how bad I thought she'd treated me—even after I felt drunk, I didn't. Honest!

Miller. How'd you happen to meet this lady, anyway?

Richard. I can't tell that, Pa. I'd have to snitch on someone—and you wouldn't want me to do that.

Miller. [A bit taken back.] No, I suppose I wouldn't. Hmm. Well, I believe you—and I guess that settles that. [Then, after a quick, furtive glance at RICHARD, he nerves himself for the ordeal and begins with a shamefaced, self-conscious solemnity.] But

listen here, Richard—hmm—it's about time you and I had a serious talk about—hmm—certain matters pertaining to—and now that the subject's come up of its own accord, it's a good time—I mean, there's no use in procrastinating further—so, here goes. *[But it doesn't go smoothly, and as he goes on he becomes more and more guiltily embarrassed and self-conscious and his expressions more stilted. RICHARD sedulously avoids even glancing at him, his own embarrassment made tenfold more painful by his FATHER'S.]* Richard—you have now come to the age when—well, you're a fully developed man, in a way—and it's only natural for you to have certain—hmm—desires of the flesh, to put it that way—I mean, pertaining to the opposite sex—hmm—certain natural feelings and temptations—that'll want to be gratified—and you'll want to gratify them. Hmm—well, human society being organized as it is, there's only one outlet for—unless you're a scoundrel and go around ruining decent girls,—which you're not, of course. Well, there are a certain class of women—always have been and always will be as long as human nature is what it is—It's wrong, maybe, but what can you do about it? I mean, girls like that one you—girls there's something doing with—and lots of 'em are pretty, and it's human nature if you— But that doesn't mean to ever get mixed up with them seriously! You just have what you want and pay 'em and forget it. I know that sounds hard and unfeeling, but we're talking facts and— Don't think I'm encouraging you to— If you can stay away from 'em, all the better—but—if why—hmm— Here's what I'm driving at, Richard. They're apt to be whited sepulchres. I mean, your whole life might be ruined if—so, darn it, you've got to know how to—I mean, there are ways and means— *[Suddenly he can go no farther and explodes helplessly.]* But, hell, I suppose you boys talk this over among yourselves and you know more about it than I do. I'll admit I'm no authority. I never had anything to do with such women, and it'll be a hell of a lot better for you if you never do!

Richard. *[Without looking at him.]* I'm never going to, Pa. *[Then shocked indignation coming into his voice.]* I don't see how you could think I could—now—when you know I love Muriel and am going to marry her. I'd die before I'd—

Miller. *[Immensely relieved—enthusiastically.]* That's the talk! By God, I'm proud of you when you talk like that! *[Then hastily.]* And now that's all of that. There's

nothing more to say and we'll forget it, eh?

Richard. *[After a pause.]* How are you going to punish me, Pa?

Miller. I was sort of forgetting that, wasn't I? Well, I'd thought of telling you you couldn't go to Yale—

Richard. *[Eagerly.]* Don't I have to go? Gee, that's great! Muriel thought you'd want me to go. I was telling her I'd rather you gave me a job on the paper because then she and I could get married sooner. *[Then with a boyish grin.]* Gee, Pa, you picked a lemon. That isn't any punishment. You'll have to do something besides that.

Miller. *[Grimly—but only half concealing an answering grin.]* Then you'll go to Yale and you'll stay there till you graduate, that's the answer to that! Muriel's got good sense and you haven't! *[RICHARD accepts this philosophically.]* And now we're finished. You better call your mother.

[RICHARD calls "Ma," toward screen door, and a moment later she comes in. She glances quickly from SON to HUSBAND and immediately knows that all is well, and tactfully refrains from all questions.]

Mrs. Miller. My, it's a beautiful night. The moon's way down low—almost setting. *[She sits in her chair and sighs contentedly.]* RICHARD remains standing by the door, staring out at the moon, his face pale in the moonlight.

Miller. *[With a nod at RICHARD, winking at his WIFE.]* Yes, I don't believe I've hardly ever seen such a beautiful night—with such a wonderful moon. Have you, Richard?

Richard. *[Turning to them—enthusiastically.]* No! It was wonderful—down at the beach—

[He stops abruptly, smiling shyly.]

Miller. *[Watching his SON—quietly.]* No, I can only remember a few nights that were as beautiful as this—and they were long ago when your mother and I were young and planning to get married.

Richard. *[Stares at them wonderingly for a moment, then quickly from his FATHER to his MOTHER and back again, strangely as if he'd never seen them before—but then suddenly his face is transfigured by a smile of understanding and sympathy. He speaks shyly.]* Yes, I'll bet those must have been wonderful nights, too. You sort of forget the moon was the same way back then—and everything.

Miller. *[A trifle huskily.]* You're all right, Richard!

Mrs. Miller. [*Fondly.*] You're a good boy, Richard.

[*RICHARD looks dreadfully shy and embarrassed at this. His FATHER comes to his rescue.*]

Miller. Better get to bed early tonight, Son, hadn't you?

Richard. I couldn't sleep. Can't I go out on the piazza and sit for a while—until the moon sets?

Miller. All right. Then you better say good night now. I don't know about your mother, but I'm going to bed right away. I'm dead tired.

Mrs. Miller. So am I.

Richard. [*Goes to her and kisses her.*] Good night, Ma.

Mrs. Miller. Good night. Don't you stay up till all hours now.

Richard. [*Comes to his FATHER and stands awkwardly before him.*] Good night, Pa.

Miller. [*Puts his arms around him and gives him a hug.*] Good night, Son. [*RICHARD turns impulsively and kisses him—then hurries out. MILLER stares after him, then says huskily.*] First time he's done that in years. I don't believe in kissing between fathers and sons after a certain age—seems mushy and silly—but that meant something! And I don't think we'll ever have to worry about his being safe—from himself—again. And I guess no matter what life will do to him, he can take care of it now. [*He sighs with satisfaction and, sitting down in his chair, begins to unlace his shoes.*] My darned feet are giving me fits!

Mrs. Miller. [*Laughing.*] Why do you bother unlacing your shoes now, you big goose—when we're going right up to bed?

Miller. [*As if he hadn't thought of that before, stops.*] Guess you're right. [*Then getting to his feet—with a grin.*] Mind if I don't say my prayers tonight, Essie? I'm certain God knows I'm too darned tired.

Mrs. Miller. Don't talk that way. It's real sinful. [*She gets up—then laughing fondly.*] If that isn't you all over! Always looking for an excuse to— You're worse than Tommy! But all right. I suppose you needn't tonight. You've had a hard day. [*She puts her hand on the reading-lamp switch.*] I'm going to turn out the light. All ready?

Miller. Yep. Let her go, Gallagher. [*She turns out the lamp. In the ensuing darkness the faint moonlight shines full in through the screen door. Walking back together toward the front parlor they stand full in it for a moment, staring out. MILLER reaches out and puts his right arm around her and she puts her left arm around him. He says in a low voice, smilingly.*] There he is—like a statue of Love's Young Dream. [*Then he sighs and speaks with a gentle nostalgic melancholy.*] What's it that Rubaiyat says: "Yet Ah, that Spring should vanish with the

Rose!

That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!"

[*Then throwing off his melancholy with a loving smile at her.*] Well, Spring isn't everything, is it, Essie? There's a lot to be said for Autumn. Autumn's got beauty, too. And Winter—if you're together!

Mrs. Miller. [*Simply.*] Yes, Nat.

[*She kisses him and then they move quietly out of the moonlight into the darkness of the front parlor.*]

CURTAIN

BLOOD WEDDING *

By

FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA

Translated by James Graham-Lujan and Richard L. O'Connell

“**B**LOOD WEDDING” WILL ESTABLISH, TO any sensitive and informed reader or viewer, the heavy loss suffered by the too-early death of Federico García Lorca. In this play is sophistication, learning, modernity, high theatricality, mixed with naïveté, primitivism, savagery, and deeply human drama. In beginning and end, the play is *The Mother's*, the same mother as Maurya of *Riders to the Sea*, in a similar tension, suffering the same release. In between, the play is the haunted lovers', at first separate and distraught, then united as arcing wires unite, with the violence and pain and ultimately death. These are old themes, but who would call *Blood Wedding* old? García Lorca is supposed to have been inspired by a newspaper story of eloping lover and bride and pursuing bridegroom. But who sees the tawdry smudge of journalism in this play? It seems written out of assured and confident instinct for the dramatically and theatrically right, for the right word and intonation of the word, for the right gesture and gesture's shape, for the right colors in setting and light, for the right directness and the right obliquity. It is indelibly Spanish, yet it echoes and reflects not only the Irish of Synge but also the German of Gottfried von Strassbourg or Richard Wagner, the French of the symbolists, the arias and choruses of Italian opera. It is, in sum, a product of total Western culture. But its Spanishness and its firm roots are in the folk, in the feeling and in the values simple people keep. For the songs of *Blood Wedding* García Lorca wrote music, and that music sounds like folk song, as if it were anonymous.

Blood Wedding illustrates splendidly the theory lovers of the drama have always had: that drama at its highest moments needs poetry, poetry that both audience and actor recognize as poetry. Enough of *Blood Wedding* is naturalistic to mark the play as embedded in our nature-worshipping period of history. But when it moves out of nature and time into art and timelessness with the lullaby of Leonardo's Wife and Mother-in-law, and further with the Three Woodcutters, the Moon, and the Beggar-Woman, it shows what even naturalism can turn into and how it can be enriched. The method can be called paradoxical symbolism, perhaps. The women sing about the horse; he is not the over-driven horse who carries Leonardo to the Bride's country, but a horse bringing dreams and quiet sleep. Yet Leonardo's horse is in the song too; as the women sing they think of him and weep. The Moon stands for the light lovers like best, but this Moon longs for their blood to warm his chill. Imperious Death is a beggar, and the lonely woodcutters here know what has happened better than the gossipy women in the marketplace. These are the tiny surprises so needed in a drama whose course can be so easily foreseen, but how much they heighten the play! Though *Blood Wedding* is not the latest play in this collection, nor the only poetic one, it may be regarded, for its exploitation of this technique, as the most advanced. To what splendors García Lorca might have carried drama had the Spanish Civil War not occurred!

The play has been performed all over the world, made into a ballet, a motion picture, and an opera. It established itself as a classic modern play within a quarter-century of its appearance.

* Reprinted by permission of New Directions.

FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA

- Born 1899, Fuentevaqueros, Granada, Spain.
 1918, Published his first book, *Impresiones y paisajes*, prose.
 1923, Licentiate in Law, University of Granada.
 1929, Traveled in Great Britain and the United States. Enrolled as student in Columbia University, New York City, from summer of 1929 to spring of 1930. Lectured at Columbia and at Vassar College.
 1930, Lectured and traveled in Cuba. Returned to Spain in summer.
 1932, Directed traveling university-theatre, "La Barraca," in Spain.
 1933-1934, Traveled, lectured, and directed plays in Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil.
 1936, Killed by Falangists at Granada during the Spanish Civil War.
 Poet, critic, artist, musician, and folklorist.

PLAYS

1920 *El maleficio de la mariposa* (translated under the Spanish title). 1923 *Los títeres de Cachiporra: La niña que riega la albahaca y el príncipe preguntón*. 1927 *Mariana Pineda*. 1928 *La doncella, el marinero y el estudiante*. 1928 *El paseo de Buster Keaton*. 1930 *La zapatera prodigiosa* (translated as *The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife*). 1931 *Así que pasen cinco años* (translated as *If Five Years Pass*). 1933 *Amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín* (translated as *The Love of Don Perlimplín and Belisa in the Garden*). 1933 *Retablillo de Don Cristóbal*. 1933 *Bodas de sangre* (translated as *Bitter Oleander* and as *Blood Wedding*). 1934 *Yerma* (translated). 1934 *El Público* (in-

complete). 1937 *Los títeres de Cachiporra: Tragicomedia de Don Cristóbal y la seña Rosita*. 1941 *Quimera*. 1945 *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (translated as *The House of Bernarda Alba*). Plays or parts of plays on which García Lorca is known to have worked may still come to light.

WRITINGS ON DRAMA

In *Obras Completas*, ed. Arturo del Hoyo (1955): "Charla sobre teatro," 33-36; "Mariana Pineda," 1533-1555; letters to Angel Ferrant, 1604-1605; interviews, 1619-1631, 1634-1636.

BLOOD WEDDING

Characters

THE MOTHER.
THE BRIDE.
THE MOTHER-IN-LAW.
LEONARDO'S WIFE.
THE SERVANT WOMAN.
THE NEIGHBOR WOMAN.
YOUNG GIRLS.

LEONARDO.
THE BRIDEGROOM.
THE BRIDE'S FATHER.
THE MOON.
DEATH (as a Beggar Woman).
WOODCUTTERS.
YOUNG MEN.

ACT ONE

SCENE I

A room painted yellow.

Bridegroom. [*Entering.*] Mother.

Mother. What?

Bridegroom. I'm going.

Mother. Where?

Bridegroom. To the vineyard.

[*He starts to go.*]

Mother. Wait.

Bridegroom. You want something?

Mother. Your breakfast, son.

Bridegroom. Forget it. I'll eat grapes.

Give me the knife.

Mother. What for?

Bridegroom. [*Laughing.*] To cut the grapes with.

Mother. [*Muttering as she looks for the knife.*] Knives, knives. Cursed be all knives, and the scoundrel who invented them.

Bridegroom. Let's talk about something else.

Mother. And guns and pistols and the smallest little knife—and even hoes and pitchforks.

Bridegroom. All right.

Mother. Everything that can slice a man's body. A handsome man, full of young life, who goes out to the vineyards or to his own olive groves—his own because he's inherited them . . .

Bridegroom. [*Lowering his head.*] Be quiet.

Mother. . . . and then that man doesn't come back. Or if he does come back it's only for someone to cover him over with a palm leaf or a plate of rock salt so he won't bloat. I don't know how you dare carry a knife on your body—or how I let this serpent [*She*

takes a knife from a kitchen chest.] stay in the chest.

Bridegroom. Have you had your say?

Mother. If I lived to be a hundred I'd talk of nothing else. First your father; to me he smelled like a carnation and I had him for barely three years. Then your brother. Oh, is it right—how can it be—that a small thing like a knife or a pistol can finish off a man—a bull of a man? No, I'll never be quiet. The months pass and the hopelessness of it stings in my eyes and even to the roots of my hair.

Bridegroom. [*Forcefully.*] Let's quit this talk!

Mother. No. No. Let's not quit this talk. Can anyone bring me your father back? Or your brother? Then there's the jail. What do they mean, jail? They eat there, smoke there, play music there! My dead men choking with weeds, silent, turning to dust. Two men like two beautiful flowers. The killers in jail, carefree, looking at the mountains.

Bridegroom. Do you want me to go kill them?

Mother. No . . . If I talk about it it's because . . . Oh, how can I help talking about it, seeing you go out that door? It's . . . I don't like you to carry a knife. It's just that . . . that I wish you wouldn't go out to the fields.

Bridegroom. [*Laughing.*] Oh, come now!

Mother. I'd like it if you were a woman. Then you wouldn't be going out to the arroyo now and we'd both of us embroider flounces and little woolly dogs.

Bridegroom. [*He puts his arm around his MOTHER and laughs.*] Mother, what if I should take you with me to the vineyards?

Mother. What would an old lady do in the vineyards? Were you going to put me down under the young vines?

Bridegroom. [*Lifting her in his arms.*] Old lady, old lady—you little old, little old lady!

Mother. Your father, he used to take me. That's the way with men of good stock; good blood. Your grandfather left a son on every corner. That's what I like. Men, men; wheat, wheat.

Bridegroom. And I, Mother?

Mother. You, what?

Bridegroom. Do I need to tell you again?

Mother. [*Seriously.*] Oh!

Bridegroom. Do you think it's bad?

Mother. No.

Bridegroom. Well, then?

Mother. I don't really know. Like this, suddenly, it always surprises me. I know the girl is good. Isn't she? Well behaved. Hard working. Kneads her bread, sews her skirts, but even so when I say her name I feel as though someone had hit me on the forehead with a rock.

Bridegroom. Foolishness.

Mother. More than foolishness. I'll be left alone. Now only you are left me—I hate to see you go.

Bridegroom. But you'll come with us.

Mother. No. I can't leave your father and brother here alone. I have to go to them every morning and if I go away it's possible one of the Félix family, one of the killers, might die—and they'd bury him next to ours. And that'll never happen! Oh, no! That'll never happen! Because I'd dig them out with my nails and, all by myself, crush them against the wall.

Bridegroom. [*Sternly.*] There you go again.

Mother. Forgive me. [*Pause.*] How long have you known her?

Bridegroom. Three years. I've been able to buy the vineyard.

Mother. Three years. She used to have another sweetheart, didn't she?

Bridegroom. I don't know. I don't think so. Girls have to look at what they'll marry.

Mother. Yes. I looked at nobody. I looked at your father, and when they killed him I looked at the wall in front of me. One woman with one man, and that's all.

Bridegroom. You know my girl's good.

Mother. I don't doubt it. All the same, I'm sorry not to have known what her mother was like.

Bridegroom. What difference does it make now?

Mother. [*Looking at him.*] Son.

Bridegroom. What is it?

Mother. That's true! You're right! When do you want me to ask for her?

Bridegroom. [*Happily.*] Does Sunday seem all right to you?

Mother. [*Seriously.*] I'll take her the bronze earrings, they're very old—and you buy her . . .

Bridegroom. You know more about that . . .

Mother. . . . you buy her some open-work stockings—and for you, two suits—three! I have no one but you now!

Bridegroom. I'm going. Tomorrow I'll go see her.

Mother. Yes, yes—and see if you can make me happy with six grandchildren—or as many as you want, since your father didn't live to give them to me.

Bridegroom. The first-born for you!

Mother. Yes, but have some girls. I want to embroider and make lace, and be at peace.

Bridegroom. I'm sure you'll love my wife.

Mother. I'll love her. [*She starts to kiss him but changes her mind.*] Go on. You're too big now for kisses. Give them to your wife. [*Pause. To herself.*] When she is your wife.

Bridegroom. I'm going.

Mother. And that land around the little mill—work it over. You've not taken good care of it.

Bridegroom. You're right. I will.

Mother. God keep you. [*THE SON goes out. THE MOTHER remains seated—her back to the door. A NEIGHBOR WOMAN with a kerchief on her head appears in the door.*] Come in.

Neighbor. How are you?

Mother. Just as you see me.

Neighbor. I came down to the store and stopped in to see you. We live so far away!

Mother. It's twenty years since I've been up to the top of the street.

Neighbor. You're looking well.

Mother. You think so?

Neighbor. Things happen. Two days ago they brought in my neighbor's son with both arms sliced off by the machine.

[*She sits down.*]

Mother. Rafael?

Neighbor. Yes. And there you have him. Many times I've thought your son and mine are better off where they are—sleeping, resting—not running the risk of being left helpless.

Mother. Hush. That's all just something thought up—but no consolation.

Neighbor. [*Sighing.*] Ay!

Mother. [*Sighing.*] Ay! [*Pause.*]

Neighbor. [Sadly.] Where's your son?

Mother. He went out.

Neighbor. He finally bought the vineyard!

Mother. He was lucky.

Neighbor. Now he'll get married.

Mother. [As though reminded of something, she draws her chair near THE NEIGHBOR.] Listen.

Neighbor. [In a confidential manner.] Yes. What is it?

Mother. You know my son's sweetheart?

Neighbor. A good girl!

Mother. Yes, but . . .

Neighbor. But who knows her really well? There's nobody. She lives out there alone with her father—so far away—fifteen miles from the nearest house. But she's a good girl. Used to being alone.

Mother. And her mother?

Neighbor. Her mother I *did* know. Beautiful. Her face glowed like a saint's—but I never liked her. She didn't love her husband.

Mother. [Sternly.] Well, what a lot of things certain people know!

Neighbor. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to offend—but it's true. Now, whether she was decent or not nobody said. That wasn't discussed. She was haughty.

Mother. There you go again!

Neighbor. You asked me.

Mother. I wish no one knew anything about them—either the live one or the dead one—that they were like two thistles no one even names but cuts off at the right moment.

Neighbor. You're right. Your son is worth a lot.

Mother. Yes—a lot. That's why I look after him. They told me the girl had a sweetheart some time ago.

Neighbor. She was about fifteen. He's been married two years now—to a cousin of hers, as a matter of fact. But nobody remembers about their engagement.

Mother. How do you remember it?

Neighbor. Oh, what questions you ask!

Mother. We like to know all about the things that hurt us. Who was the boy?

Neighbor. Leonardo.

Mother. What Leonardo?

Neighbor. Leonardo Félix.

Mother. Félix!

Neighbor. Yes, but—how is Leonardo to blame for anything? He was eight years old when those things happened.

Mother. That's true. But I hear that name—Félix—and it's all the same. [Muttering.] Félix, a slimy mouthful. [She spits.] It makes me spit—spit so I won't kill!

Neighbor. Control yourself. What good will it do?

Mother. No good. But you see how it is.

Neighbor. Don't get in the way of your son's happiness. Don't say anything to him. You're old. So am I. It's time for you and me to keep quiet.

Mother. I'll say nothing to him.

Neighbor. [Kissing her.] Nothing.

Mother. [Calmly.] Such things . . . !

Neighbor. I'm going. My men will soon be coming in from the fields.

Mother. Have you ever known such a hot sun?

Neighbor. The children carrying water out to the reapers are black with it. Good-bye, woman.

Mother. Goodbye.

[THE MOTHER starts toward the door at the left. Halfway there she stops and slowly crosses herself.]

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

SCENE II

A room painted rose with copperware and wreaths of common flowers. In the center of the room is a table with a tablecloth. It is morning.

[LEONARDO'S MOTHER-IN-LAW sits in one corner holding a child in her arms and rocking it. His WIFE is in the other corner mending stockings.]

Mother-in-law.

Lullaby, my baby
once there was a big horse
who didn't like water.
The water was black there
under the branches.
When it reached the bridge
it stopped and it sang.
Who can say, my baby,
what the stream holds

with its long tail
in its green parlor?

Wife. [Softly.]

Carnation, sleep and dream,
the horse won't drink from the stream.

Mother-in-law.

My rose, asleep now lie,
the horse is starting to cry.
His poor hooves were bleeding,
his long mane was frozen,
and deep in his eyes
stuck a silvery dagger.

Down he went to the river,
Oh, down he went down!
And his blood was running,
Oh, more than the water.

Wife.

Carnation, sleep and dream,
the horse won't drink from the stream.

Mother-in-law.

My rose, asleep now lie,
the horse is starting to cry.

Wife.

He never did touch
the dank river shore
though his muzzle was warm
and with silvery flies.
So, to the hard mountains
he could only whinny
just when the dead stream
covered his throat.
Ay-y-y, for the big horse
who didn't like water!
Ay-y-y, for the snow-wound,
big horse of the dawn!

Mother-in-law.

Don't come in! Stop him
and close up the window
with branches of dreams
and a dream of branches.

Wife.

My baby is sleeping.

Mother-in-law.

My baby is quiet.

Wife.

Look, horse, my baby
has him a pillow.

Mother-in-law.

His cradle is metal.

Wife.

His quilt a fine fabric.

Mother-in-law.

Lullaby, my baby.

Wife.

Ay-y-y, for the big horse
who didn't like water!

Mother-in-law.

Don't come near, don't come in!
Go away to the mountains
and through the grey valleys,
that's where your mare is.

Wife. [Looking at the baby.]

My baby is sleeping.

Mother-in-law.

My baby is resting.

Wife. [Softly.]

Carnation, sleep and dream,
The horse won't drink from the stream.

Mother-in-law. [Getting up, very softly.]

My rose, asleep now lie
for the horse is starting to cry.
[She carries the child out. LEONARDO
enters.]

Leonardo. Where's the baby?

Wife. He's sleeping.

Leonardo. Yesterday he wasn't well. He
cried during the night.

Wife. Today he's like a dahlia. And you?
Were you at the blacksmith's?

Leonardo. I've just come from there.
Would you believe it? For more than two
months he's been putting new shoes on the
horse and they're always coming off. As
far as I can see he pulls them off on the
stones.

Wife. Couldn't it just be that you use him
so much?

Leonardo. No. I almost never use him.

Wife. Yesterday the neighbors told me
they'd seen you on the far side of the plains.

Leonardo. Who said that?

Wife. The women who gather capers. It
certainly surprised me. Was it you?

Leonardo. No. What would I be doing
there, in that wasteland?

Wife. That's what I said. But the horse
was streaming sweat.

Leonardo. Did you see him?

Wife. No. Mother did.

Leonardo. Is she with the baby?

Wife. Yes. Do you want some lemonade?

Leonardo. With good cold water.

Wife. And then you didn't come to eat!

Leonardo. I was with the wheat weighers.
They always hold me up.

Wife. [Very tenderly, while she makes
the lemonade.] Did they pay you a good
price?

Leonardo. Fair.

Wife. I need a new dress and the baby a
bonnet with ribbons.

Leonardo. [Getting up.] I'm going to
take a look at him.

Wife. Be careful. He's asleep.

Mother-in-law. [Coming in.] Well! Who's
been racing the horse that way? He's down
there, worn out, his eyes popping from their
sockets as though he'd come from the ends
of the earth.

Leonardo. [Acidly.] I have.

Mother-in-law. Oh, excuse me! He's your
horse.

Wife. [Timidly.] He was at the wheat buyers.

Mother-in-law. He can burst for all of me! [She sits down. Pause.]

Wife. Your drink. Is it cold?

Leonardo. Yes.

Wife. Did you hear they're going to ask for my cousin?

Leonardo. When?

Wife. Tomorrow. The wedding will be within a month. I hope they're going to invite us.

Leonardo. [Gravely.] I don't know.

Mother-in-law. His mother, I think, wasn't very happy about the match.

Leonardo. Well, she may be right. She's a girl to be careful with.

Wife. I don't like to have you thinking bad things about a good girl.

Mother-in-law. [Meaningfully.] If he does, it's because he knows her. Didn't you know he courted her for three years?

Leonardo. But I left her. [To his WIFE.] Are you going to cry now? Quit that! [He brusquely pulls her hands away from her face.] Let's go see the baby.

[They go in with their arms around each other. A GIRL appears. She is happy. She enters running.]

Girl. Señora.

Mother-in-law. What is it?

Girl. The groom came to the store and he's bought the best of everything they had.

Mother-in-law. Was he alone?

Girl. No. With his mother. Stern, tall. [She imitates her.] And such extravagance!

Mother-in-law. They have money.

Girl. And they bought some open-work stockings! Oh, such stockings! A woman's dream of stockings! Look: a swallow here, [She points to her ankle.] a ship here, [She points to her calf.] and here, [She points to her thigh.] a rose!

Mother-in-law. Child!

Girl. A rose with the seeds and the stem! Oh! All in silk.

Mother-in-law. Two rich families are being brought together.

[LEONARDO and his WIFE appear.]

Girl. I came to tell you what they're buying.

Leonardo. [Loudly.] We don't care.

Wife. Leave her alone.

Mother-in-law. Leonardo, it's not that important.

Girl. Please excuse me.

[She leaves, weeping.]

Mother-in-law. Why do you always have to make trouble with people?

Leonardo. I didn't ask for your opinion.

[He sits down.]

Mother-in-law. Very well. [Pause.]

Wife. [To LEONARDO.] What's the matter with you? What idea've you got boiling there inside your head? Don't leave me like this, not knowing anything.

Leonardo. Stop that.

Wife. No. I want you to look at me and tell me.

Leonardo. Let me alone. [He rises.]

Wife. Where are you going, love?

Leonardo. [Sharply.] Can't you shut up?

Mother-in-law. [Energetically, to her DAUGHTER.] Be quiet! [LEONARDO goes out.] The baby!

[She goes into the bedroom and comes out again with the baby in her arms. THE WIFE has remained standing, unmoving.]

Mother-in-law.

His poor hooves were bleeding,
his long mane was frozen,
and deep in his eyes
stuck a silvery dagger.
Down he went to the river,
Oh, down he went down!
And his blood was running,
Oh, more than the water.

Wife. [Turning slowly, as though dreaming.]

Carnation, sleep and dream,
the horse is drinking from the stream.

Mother-in-law.

My rose, asleep now lie
the horse is starting to cry.

Wife.

Lullaby, my baby.

Mother-in-law.

Ay-y-y, for the big horse
who didn't like water!

Wife. [Dramatically.]

Don't come near, don't come in!
Go away to the mountains!
Ay-y-y, for the snow-wound,
big horse of the dawn!

Mother-in-law. [Weeping.]

My baby is sleeping . . .

Wife. [Weeping, as she slowly moves closer.]

My baby is resting . . .

Mother-in-law.

Carnation, sleep and dream,
the horse won't drink from the stream.

Wife. [Weeping, and leaning on the table.]

My rose, asleep now lie,
the horse is starting to cry.

ACT ONE

SCENE III

Interior of the cave where THE BRIDE lives. At the back is a cross of large rose-colored flowers. The rounded doors have lace curtains with rose-colored ties. Around the walls, which are of a white and hard material, are round fans, blue jars, and little mirrors.

Servant. Come right in . . . [She is very affable, full of humble hypocrisy. THE BRIDEGROOM and his MOTHER enter. THE MOTHER is dressed in black satin and wears a lace mantilla; THE BRIDEGROOM in black corduroy with a great golden chain.] Won't you sit down? They'll be right here.

[She leaves. THE MOTHER and SON are left sitting motionless as statues. Long pause.]

Mother. Did you wear the watch?

Bridegroom. Yes.

[He takes it out and looks at it.]

Mother. We have to be back on time. How far away these people live!

Bridegroom. But this is good land.

Mother. Good; but much too lonesome. A four-hour trip and not one house, not one tree.

Bridegroom. This is the wasteland.

Mother. Your father would have covered it with trees.

Bridegroom. Without water?

Mother. He would have found some. In the three years we were married he planted ten cherry trees, [Remembering.] those three walnut trees by the mill, a whole vineyard and a plant called Jupiter which had scarlet flowers—but it dried up. [Pause.]

Bridegroom. [Referring to THE BRIDE.] She must be dressing.

[THE BRIDE'S FATHER enters. He is very old, with shining white hair. His head is bowed. THE MOTHER and THE BRIDEGROOM rise. They shake hands in silence.]

Father. Was it a long trip?

Mother. Four hours. [They sit down.]

Father. You must have come the longest way.

Mother. I'm too old to come along the cliffs by the river.

Bridegroom. She gets dizzy. [Pause.]

Father. A good hemp harvest.

Bridegroom. A really good one.

Father. When I was young this land didn't even grow hemp. We've had to punish it,

even weep over it, to make it give us anything useful.

Mother. But now it does. Don't complain. I'm not here to ask you for anything.

Father. [Smiling.] You're richer than I. Your vineyards are worth a fortune. Each young vine a silver coin. But—do you know?—what bothers me is that our lands are separated. I like to have everything together. One thorn I have in my heart, and that's the little orchard there, stuck in between my fields—and they won't sell it to me for all the gold in the world.

Bridegroom. That's the way it always is.

Father. If we could just take twenty teams of oxen and move your vineyards over here, and put them down on that hillside, how happy I'd be!

Mother. But why?

Father. What's mine is hers and what's yours is his. That's why. Just to see it all together. How beautiful it is to bring things together!

Bridegroom. And it would be less work.

Mother. When I die, you could sell ours and buy here, right alongside.

Father. Sell, sell? Bah! Buy, my friend, buy everything. If I had had sons I would have bought all this mountainside right up to the part with the stream. It's not good land, but strong arms can make it good, and since no people pass by, they don't steal your fruit and you can sleep in peace. [Pause.]

Mother. You know what I'm here for.

Father. Yes.

Mother. And?

Father. It seems all right to me. They have talked it over.

Mother. My son has money and knows how to manage it.

Father. My daughter too.

Mother. My son is handsome. He's never known a woman. His good name cleaner than a sheet spread out in the sun.

Father. No need to tell you about my daughter. At three, when the morning star shines, she prepares the bread. She never talks: soft as wool, she embroiders all kinds of fancy work and she can cut a strong cord with her teeth.

Mother. God bless her house.

Father. May God bless it.

[THE SERVANT appears with two trays. One with drinks and the other with sweets.]

Mother. [To THE SON.] When would you like the wedding?

Bridegroom. Next Thursday.

Father. The day on which she'll be exactly twenty-two years old.

Mother. Twenty-two! My oldest son would be that age if he were alive. Warm and manly as he was, he'd be living now if men hadn't invented knives.

Father. One mustn't think about that.

Mother. Every minute. Always a hand on your breast.

Father. Thursday, then? Is that right?

Bridegroom. That's right.

Father. You and I and the bridal couple will go in a carriage to the church which is very far from here; the wedding party on the carts and horses they'll bring with them.

Mother. Agreed.

[*THE SERVANT passes through.*]

Father. Tell her she may come in now.
[*TO THE MOTHER.*] I shall be much pleased if you like her.

[*THE BRIDE appears. Her hands fall in a modest pose and her head is bowed.*]

Mother. Come here. Are you happy?

Bride. Yes, señora.

Father. You shouldn't be so solemn. After all, she's going to be your mother.

Bride. I'm happy. I've said "yes" because I wanted to.

Mother. Naturally. [*She takes her by the chin.*] Look at me.

Father. She resembles my wife in every way.

Mother. Yes? What a beautiful glance! Do you know what it is to be married, child?

Bride. [*Seriously.*] I do.

Mother. A man, some children and a wall two yards thick for everything else.

Bridegroom. Is anything else needed?

Mother. No. Just that you all live—that's it! Live long!

Bride. I'll know how to keep my word.

Mother. Here are some gifts for you.

Bride. Thank you.

Father. Shall we have something?

Mother. Nothing for me. [*TO THE SON.*]
But you?

Bridegroom. Yes, thank you.

[*He takes one sweet, THE BRIDE another.*]

Father. [*TO THE BRIDEGROOM.*] Wine?

Mother. He doesn't touch it.

Father. All the better.

[*Pause. All are standing.*]

Bridegroom. [*TO THE BRIDE.*] I'll come tomorrow.

Bride. What time?

Bridegroom. Five.

Bride. I'll be waiting for you.

Bridegroom. When I leave your side I feel

a great emptiness, and something like a knot in my throat.

Bride. When you are my husband you won't have it any more.

Bridegroom. That's what I tell myself.

Mother. Come. The sun doesn't wait.
[*TO THE FATHER.*] Are we agreed on everything?

Father. Agreed.

Mother. [*TO THE SERVANT.*] Goodbye, woman.

Servant. God go with you!

[*THE MOTHER kisses THE BRIDE and they begin to leave in silence.*]

Mother. [*At the door.*] Goodbye, daughter.

[*THE BRIDE answers with her hand.*]

Father. I'll go out with you.

[*They leave.*]

Servant. I'm bursting to see the presents.

Bride. [*Sharply.*] Stop that!

Servant. Oh, child, show them to me.

Bride. I don't want to.

Servant. At least the stockings. They say they're all open work. Please!

Bride. I said no.

Servant. Well, my Lord. All right then. It looks as if you didn't want to get married.

Bride. [*Biting her hand in anger.*]
Ay-y-y!

Servant. Child, child! What's the matter with you? Are you sorry to give up your queen's life? Don't think of bitter things. Have you any reason to? None. Let's look at the presents. [*She takes the box.*]

Bride. [*Holding her by the wrists.*] Let go.

Servant. Ay-y-y, girl!

Bride. Let go, I said.

Servant. You're stronger than a man.

Bride. Haven't I done a man's work? I wish I were.

Servant. Don't talk like that.

Bride. Quiet, I said. Let's talk about something else.

[*The light is fading from the stage.*
Long pause.]

Servant. Did you hear a horse last night?

Bride. What time?

Servant. Three.

Bride. It might have been a stray horse—from the herd.

Servant. No. It carried a rider.

Bride. How do you know?

Servant. Because I saw him. He was standing by your window. It shocked me greatly.

Bride. Maybe it was my fiancé. Sometimes he comes by at that time.

Servant. No.

Bride. You saw him?
 Servant. Yes.
 Bride. Who was it?
 Servant. It was Leonardo.
 Bride. [*Strongly.*] Liar! You liar! Why should he come here?

Servant. He came.
 Bride. Shut up! Shut your cursed mouth.
 [*The sound of a horse is heard.*]
 Servant. [*At the window.*] Look. Lean out. Was it Leonardo?
 Bride. It was!

QUICK CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE I

The entrance hall of THE BRIDE's house. A large door in the back. It is night.

[*THE BRIDE enters wearing ruffled white petticoats full of laces and embroidered bands, and a sleeveless white bodice. THE SERVANT is dressed the same way.*]

Servant. I'll finish combing your hair out here.

Bride. It's too warm to stay in there.

Servant. In this country it doesn't even cool off at dawn.

[*THE BRIDE sits on a low chair and looks into a little hand mirror. THE SERVANT combs her hair.*]

Bride. My mother came from a place with lots of trees—from a fertile country.

Servant. And she was so happy!

Bride. But she wasted away here.

Servant. Fate.

Bride. As we're all wasting away here. The very walls give off heat. Ay-y-y! Don't pull so hard.

Servant. I'm only trying to fix this wave better. I want it to fall over your forehead. [*THE BRIDE looks at herself in the mirror.*] How beautiful you are! Ay-y-y!

[*She kisses her passionately.*]

Bride. [*Seriously.*] Keep right on combing.

Servant. [*Combing.*] Oh, lucky you—going to put your arms around a man; and kiss him; and feel his weight.

Bride. Hush.

Servant. And the best part will be when you'll wake up and you'll feel him at your side and when he caresses your shoulders with his breath, like a little nightingale's feather.

Bride. [*Sternly.*] Will you be quiet?

Servant. But, child! What is a wedding? A wedding is just that and nothing more. Is it the sweets—or the bouquets of flowers?

No. It's a shining bed and a man and a woman.

Bride. But you shouldn't talk about it.

Servant. Oh, that's something else again. But fun enough too.

Bride. Or bitter enough.

Servant. I'm going to put the orange blossoms on from here to here, so the wreath will shine out on top of your hair.

[*She tries on the sprigs of orange blossom.*]

Bride. [*Looking at herself in the mirror.*] Give it to me.

[*She takes the wreath, looks at it and lets her head fall in discouragement.*]

Servant. Now what's the matter?

Bride. Leave me alone.

Servant. This is no time for you to start feeling sad. [*Encouragingly.*] Give me the wreath. [*THE BRIDE takes the wreath and hurls it away.*] Child! You're just asking God to punish you, throwing the wreath on the floor like that. Raise your head! Don't you want to get married? Say it. You can still withdraw. [*THE BRIDE rises.*]

Bride. Storm clouds. A chill wind that cuts through my heart. Who hasn't felt it?

Servant. You love your sweetheart, don't you?

Bride. I love him.

Servant. Yes, yes. I'm sure you do.

Bride. But this is a very serious step.

Servant. You've got to take it.

Bride. I've already given my word.

Servant. I'll put on the wreath.

Bride. [*She sits down.*] Hurry. They should be arriving by now.

Servant. They've already been at least two hours on the way.

Bride. How far is it from here to the church?

Servant. Five leagues by the stream, but twice that by the road.

[*THE BRIDE rises and THE SERVANT grows excited as she looks at her.*]

Servant.

Awake, O Bride, awaken,
On your wedding morning waken!
The world's rivers may all
Bear along your bridal Crown!

Bride. [Smiling.] Come now.

Servant. [Enthusiastically kissing her and dancing around her.]

Awake,
with the fresh bouquet
of flowering laurel.

Awake,
by the trunk and branch
of the laurels!

[The banging of the front door latch is heard.]

Bride. Open the door! That must be the first guests.

[She leaves. THE SERVANT opens the door.]

Servant. [In astonishment.] You!

Leonardo. Yes, me. Good morning.

Servant. The first one!

Leonardo. Wasn't I invited?

Servant. Yes.

Leonardo. That's why I'm here.

Servant. Where's your wife?

Leonardo. I came on my horse. She's coming by the road.

Servant. Didn't you meet anyone?

Leonardo. I passed them on my horse.

Servant. You're going to kill that horse with so much racing.

Leonardo. When he dies, he's dead!

[Pause.]

Servant. Sit down. Nobody's up yet.

Leonardo. Where's the bride?

Servant. I'm just on my way to dress her.

Leonardo. The bride! She ought to be happy!

Servant. [Changing the subject.] How's the baby?

Leonardo. What baby?

Servant. Your son.

Leonardo. [Remembering, as though in a dream.] Ah!

Servant. Are they bringing him?

Leonardo. No.

[Pause. Voices sing distantly.]

Voices.

Awake, O Bride, awaken,
On your wedding morning waken!

Leonardo.

Awake, O Bride, awaken,
On your wedding morning waken!

Servant. It's the guests. They're still quite a way off.

Leonardo. The bride's going to wear a big wreath, isn't she? But it ought not to be so large. One a little smaller would look better

on her. Has the groom already brought her the orange blossom that must be worn on the breast?

Bride. [Appearing, still in petticoats and wearing the wreath.] He brought it.

Servant. [Sternly.] Don't come out like that.

Bride. What does it matter? *[Seriously.]* Why do you ask if they brought the orange blossom? Do you have something in mind?

Leonardo. Nothing. What would I have in mind? *[Drawing near her.]* You, you know me; you know I don't. Tell me so. What have I ever meant to you? Open your memory, refresh it. But two oxen and an ugly little hut are almost nothing. That's the thorn.

Bride. What have you come here to do?

Leonardo. To see your wedding.

Bride. Just as I saw yours!

Leonardo. Tied up by you, done with your two hands. Oh, they can kill me but they can't spit on me. But even money, which shines so much, spits sometimes.

Bride. Liar!

Leonardo. I don't want to talk. I'm hot-blooded and I don't want to shout so all these hills will hear me.

Bride. My shouts would be louder.

Servant. You'll have to stop talking like this. *[To THE BRIDE.]* You don't have to talk about what's past.

[THE SERVANT looks around uneasily at the doors.]

Bride. She's right. I shouldn't even talk to you. But it offends me to the soul that you come here to watch me, and spy on my wedding, and ask about the orange blossom with something on your mind. Go and wait for your wife at the door.

Leonardo. But can't you and I even talk?

Servant. [With rage.] No! No, you can't talk.

Leonardo. Ever since I got married I've been thinking night and day about whose fault it was, and every time I think about it, out comes a new fault to eat up the old one; but always there's a fault left!

Bride. A man with a horse knows a lot of things and can do a lot to ride roughshod over a girl stuck out in the desert. But I have my pride. And that's why I'm getting married. I'll lock myself in with my husband and then I'll have to love him above everyone else.

Leonardo. Pride won't help you a bit.

[He draws near to her.]

Bride. Don't come near me!

Leonardo. To burn with desire and keep

quiet about it is the greatest punishment we can bring on ourselves. What good was pride to me—and not seeing you, and letting you lie awake night after night? No good! It only served to bring the fire down on me! You think that time heals and walls hide things, but it isn't true, it isn't true! When things get that deep inside you there isn't anybody can change them.

Bride. [Trembling.] I can't listen to you. I can't listen to your voice. It's as though I'd drunk a bottle of anise and fallen asleep wrapped in a quilt of roses. It pulls me along, and I know I'm drowning—but I go on down.

Servant. [Seizing LEONARDO by the lapels.] You've got to go right now!

Leonardo. This is the last time I'll ever talk to her. Don't you be afraid of anything.

Bride. And I know I'm crazy and I know my breast rots with longing; but here I am—calmed by hearing him, by just seeing him move his arms.

Leonardo. I'd never be at peace if I didn't tell you these things. I got married. Now you get married.

Servant. But she is getting married!

[Voices are heard singing, nearer.]

Voices.

Awake, O Bride, awaken,
On your wedding morning waken!

Bride.

Awake, O Bride, awaken!
[She goes out, running toward her room.]

Servant. The people are here now. *[To LEONARDO.]* Don't you come near her again.

Leonardo. Don't worry.

[He goes out to the left. Day begins to break.]

First Girl. [Entering.]

Awake, O Bride, awaken,
the morning you're to marry;
sing round and dance round;
balconies a wreath must carry.

Voices.

Bride, awaken!

Servant. [Creating enthusiasm.]

Awake,
with the green bouquet
of love in flower.
Awake,
by the trunk and the branch
of the laurels!

Second Girl. [Entering.]

Awake,
with her long hair,
snowy sleeping gown,
patent leather boots with silver—
her forehead jasmines crown.

Servant.

Oh, shepherdess,
the moon begins to shine!

First Girl.

Oh, gallant,
leave your hat beneath the vine!

First Young Man. [Entering, holding his hat on high.]

Bride, awaken,
for over the fields
the wedding draws nigh
with trays heaped with dahlias
and cakes piled high.

Voices.

Bride, awaken!

Second Girl.

The bride
has set her white wreath in place
and the groom
ties it on with a golden lace.

Servant.

By the orange tree,
sleepless the bride will be.

Third Girl. [Entering.]

By the citron vine,
gifts from the groom will shine.

[Three GUESTS come in.]

First Youth.

Dove, awaken!
In the dawn
shadowy bells are shaken.

Guest.

The bride, the white bride
today a maiden,
tomorrow a wife.

First Girl.

Dark one, come down
trailing the train of your silken gown.

Guest.

Little dark one, come down,
cold morning wears a dewy crown.

First Youth.

Awaken, wife, awake,
orange blossoms the breezes shake.

Servant.

A tree I would embroider her
with garnet sashes wound,
And on each sash a cupid,
with "Long Live" all around.

Voices.

Bride, awaken.

First Youth.

The morning you're to marry!

Guest.

The morning you're to marry
how elegant you'll seem;
worthy, mountain flower,
of a captain's dream.

Father. [Entering.]

A captain's wife

the groom will marry.

He comes with his oxen the treasure to carry!

Third Girl.

The groom
is like a flower of gold.
When he walks,
blossoms at his feet unfold.

Servant.

Oh, my lucky girl!

Second Youth.

Bride, awaken.

Servant.

Oh, my elegant girl!

First Girl.

Through the windows
hear the wedding shout.

Second Girl.

Let the bride come out.

First Girl.

Come out, come out!

Servant.

Let the bells
ring and ring out clear!

First Youth.

For here she comes!

For now she's near!

Servant.

Like a bull, the wedding
is arising here!

[THE BRIDE appears. She wears a black dress in the style of 1900, with a bustle and large train covered with pleated gauzes and heavy laces. Upon her hair, brushed in a wave over her forehead, she wears an orange blossom wreath. Guitars sound. The GIRLS kiss THE BRIDE.]

Third Girl. What scent did you put on your hair?

Bride. [Laughing.] None at all.

Second Girl. [Looking at her dress.] This cloth is what you can't get.

First Youth. Here's the groom!

Bridegroom. Salud!

First Girl. [Putting a flower behind his ear.]

The groom
is like a flower of gold.

Second Girl.

Quiet breezes
from his eyes unfold.

[THE GROOM goes to THE BRIDE.]

Bride. Why did you put on those shoes?

Bridegroom. They're gayer than the black ones.

Leonardo's Wife. [Entering and kissing THE BRIDE.] Salud!

[They all speak excitedly.]

Leonardo. [Entering as one who performs a duty.]

The morning you're to marry
We give you a wreath to wear.

Leonardo's Wife.

So the fields may be made happy
with the dew dropped from your hair!

Mother. [To THE FATHER.] Are those people here, too?

Father. They're part of the family. Today is a day of forgiveness!

Mother. I'll put up with it, but I don't forgive.

Bridegroom. With your wreath, it's a joy to look at you!

Bride. Let's go to the church quickly.

Bridegroom. Are you in a hurry?

Bride. Yes. I want to be your wife right now so that I can be with you alone, not hearing any voice but yours.

Bridegroom. That's what I want!

Bride. And not seeing any eyes but yours. And for you to hug me so hard that even though my dead mother should call me I wouldn't be able to draw away from you.

Bridegroom. My arms are strong. I'll hug you for forty years without stopping.

Bride. [Taking his arm, dramatically.] Forever!

Father. Quick now! Round up the teams and carts! The sun's already out.

Mother. And go along carefully! Let's hope nothing goes wrong.

[The great door in the background opens.]

Servant. [Weeping.]

As you set out from your house,
oh, maiden white,
remember you leave shining
with a star's light.

First Girl.

Clean of body, clean of clothes
from her home to church she goes.

[They start leaving.]

Second Girl.

Now you leave your home
for the church!

Servant.

The wind sets flowers
on the sands.

Third Girl.

Ah, the white maid!

Servant.

Dark winds are the lace
of her mantilla.

[They leave. Guitars, castanets and tambourines are heard. LEONARDO and his WIFE are left alone.]

Wife. Let's go.

Leonardo. Where?

Wife. To the church. But not on your horse. You're coming with me.

Leonardo. In the cart?

Wife. Is there anything else?

Leonardo. I'm not the kind of man to ride in a cart.

Wife. Nor I the wife to go to a wedding without her husband. I can't stand any more of this!

Leonardo. Neither can I!

Wife. And why do you look at me that way? With a thorn in each eye.

Leonardo. Let's go!

Wife. I don't know what's happening. But I think, and I don't want to think. One thing I do know. I'm already cast off by you. But I have a son. And another coming. And so it goes. My mother's fate was the same. Well, I'm not moving from here.

Voices. [Outside.]

As you set out from your home
and to the church go
remember you leave shining
with a star's glow.

Wife. [Weeping.]

Remember you leave shining
with a star's glow!

I left my house like that too. They could
have stuffed the whole countryside in my
mouth. I was that trusting.

Leonardo. [Rising.] Let's go!

Wife. But you with me!

Leonardo. Yes. [Pause.] Start moving!
[They leave.]

Voices.

As you set out from your home
and to the church go,
remember you leave shining
with a star's glow.

SLOW CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE II

The exterior of THE BRIDE'S Cave Home, in white gray and cold blue tones. Large cactus trees. Shadowy and silver tones. Panoramas of light tan tablelands, everything hard like a landscape in popular ceramics.

Servant. [Arranging glasses and trays on a table.]

A-turning,
the wheel was a-turning
and the water was flowing,
for the wedding night comes.
May the branches part
and the moon be arrayed
at her white balcony rail.

[In a loud voice.] Set out the tablecloths!
[In a pathetic voice.]

A-singing,
bride and groom were singing
and the water was flowing
for their wedding night comes.
Oh, rime-frost, flash!—
and almonds bitter
fill with honey!

[In a loud voice.] Get the wine ready!
[In a poetic tone.]

Elegant girl,
most elegant in the world,

see the way the water is flowing,
for your wedding night comes.
Hold your skirts close in
under the bridegroom's wing
and never leave your house,
for the Bridegroom is a dove
with his breast a firebrand
and the fields wait for the whisper
of spurting blood.

A-turning
the wheel was a-turning
and the water was flowing
and your wedding night comes.
Oh, water, sparkle!

Mother. [Entering.] At last!

Father. Are we the first ones?

Servant. No. Leonardo and his wife arrived a while ago. They drove like demons. His wife got here dead with fright. They made the trip as though they'd come on horseback.

Father. That one's looking for trouble. He's not of good blood.

Mother. What blood would you expect him to have? His whole family's blood. It comes down from his great-grandfather, who started in killing, and it goes on down through the whole evil breed of knife-wielding and false-smiling men.

Father. Let's leave it at that!

Servant. But how can she leave it at that?

Mother. It hurts me to the tips of my veins. On the forehead of all of them I see only the hand with which they killed what was mine. Can you really see me? Don't I seem mad to you? Well, it's the madness of not having shrieked out all my breast needs to. Always in my breast there's a shriek standing tiptoe that I have to beat down and hold in under my shawls. But the dead are carried off and one has to keep still. And then, people find fault.

[*She removes her shawl.*]

Father. Today's not the day for you to be remembering these things.

Mother. When the talk turns on it, I have to speak. And more so today. Because today I'm left alone in my house.

Father. But with the expectation of having someone with you.

Mother. That's my hope: grandchildren.

[*They sit down.*]

Father. I want them to have a lot of them. This land needs hands that aren't hired. There's a battle to be waged against weeds, the thistles, the big rocks that come from one doesn't know where. And those hands have to be the owner's, who chastises and dominates, who makes the seeds grow. Lots of sons are needed.

Mother. And some daughters! Men are like the wind! They're forced to handle weapons. Girls never go out into the street.

Father. [*Happily.*] I think they'll have both.

Mother. My son will cover her well. He's of good seed. His father could have had many sons with me.

Father. What I'd like is to have all this happen in a day. So that right away they'd have two or three boys.

Mother. But it's not like that. It takes a long time. That's why it's so terrible to see one's own blood spilled out on the ground. A fountain that spurts for a minute, but costs us years. When I got to my son, he lay fallen in the middle of the street. I wet my hands with his blood and licked them with my tongue—because it was my blood. You don't know what that's like. In a glass and topaz shrine I'd put the earth moistened by his blood.

Father. Now you must hope. My daughter is wide-hipped and your son is strong.

Mother. That's why I'm hoping.

[*They rise.*]

Father. Get the wheat trays ready!

Servant. They're all ready.

Leonardo's Wife. [*Entering.*] May it be for the best!

Mother. Thank you.

Leonardo. Is there going to be a celebration?

Father. A small one. People can't stay long.

Servant. Here they are!

[*GUESTS begin entering in gay groups.*]

THE BRIDE and GROOM come in arm-in-arm. LEONARDO leaves.]

Bridegroom. There's never been a wedding with so many people!

Bride. [*Sullen.*] Never.

Father. It was brilliant.

Mother. Whole branches of families came.

Bridegroom. People who never went out of the house.

Mother. Your father sowed well, and now you're reaping it.

Bridegroom. There were cousins of mine whom I no longer knew.

Mother. All the people from the seacoast.

Bridegroom. [*Happily.*] They were frightened of the horses. [*They talk.*]

Mother. [*TO THE BRIDE.*] What are you thinking about?

Bride. I'm not thinking about anything.

Mother. Your blessings weigh heavily.

[*Guitars are heard.*]

Bride. Like lead.

Mother. [*Stern.*] But they shouldn't weigh so. Happy as a dove you ought to be.

Bride. Are you staying here tonight?

Mother. No. My house is empty.

Bride. You ought to stay!

Father. [*TO THE MOTHER.*] Look at the dance they're forming. Dances of the far away seashore.

[*LEONARDO enters and sits down. His WIFE stands rigidly behind him.*]

Mother. They're my husband's cousins. Stiff as stones at dancing.

Father. It makes me happy to watch them. What a change for this house!

[*He leaves.*]

Bridegroom. [*TO THE BRIDE.*] Did you like the orange blossom?

Bride. [*Looking at him fixedly.*] Yes.

Bridegroom. It's all of wax. It will last forever. I'd like you to have had them all over your dress.

Bride. No need of that.

[*LEONARDO goes off to the right.*]

First Girl. Let's go and take out your pins.

Bride. [*TO THE GROOM.*] I'll be right back.

Leonardo's Wife. I hope you'll be happy with my cousin!

Bridegroom. I'm sure I will.

Leonardo's Wife. The two of you here;

never going out; building a home. I wish I could live far away like this, too!

Bridegroom. Why don't you buy land? The mountainside is cheap and children grow up better.

Leonardo's Wife. We don't have any money. And at the rate we're going . . . !

Bridegroom. Your husband is a good worker.

Leonardo's Wife. Yes, but he likes to fly around too much; from one thing to another. He's not a patient man.

Servant. Aren't you having anything? I'm going to wrap up some wine cakes for your mother. She likes them so much.

Bridegroom. Put up three dozen for her.

Leonardo's Wife. No, no. A half-dozen's enough for her!

Bridegroom. But today's a day!

Leonardo's Wife. [To THE SERVANT.] Where's Leonardo?

Bridegroom. He must be with the guests.

Leonardo's Wife. I'm going to go see.

[She leaves.]

Servant. [Looking off at the dance.] That's beautiful there.

Bridegroom. Aren't you dancing?

Servant. No one will ask me.

[TWO GIRLS pass across the back of the stage; during this whole scene the background should be an animated crossing of figures.]

Bridegroom. [Happily.] They just don't know anything. Lively old girls like you dance better than the young ones.

Servant. Well! Are you tossing me a compliment, boy? What a family yours is! Men among men! As a little girl I saw your grandfather's wedding. What a figure! It seemed as if a mountain were getting married.

Bridegroom. I'm not as tall.

Servant. But there's the same twinkle in your eye. Where's the girl?

Bridegroom. Taking off her wreath.

Servant. Ah! Look. For midnight, since you won't be sleeping, I have prepared ham for you, and some large glasses of old wine. On the lower shelf of the cupboard. In case you need it.

Bridegroom. [Smiling.] I won't be eating at midnight.

Servant. [Slyly.] If not you, maybe the bride.

[She leaves.]

First Youth. [Entering.] You've got to come have a drink with us!

Bridegroom. I'm waiting for the bride.

Second Youth. You'll have her at dawn!

First Youth. That's when it's best!

Second Youth. Just for a minute.

Bridegroom. Let's go.

[They leave. Great excitement is heard. THE BRIDE enters. From the opposite side TWO GIRLS come running to meet her.]

First Girl. To whom did you give the first pin; me or this one?

Bride. I don't remember.

First Girl. To me, you gave it to me here.

Second Girl. To me, in front of the altar.

Bride. [Uneasily, with a great inner struggle.] I don't know anything about it.

First Girl. It's just that I wish you'd . . .

Bride. [Interrupting.] Nor do I care. I have a lot to think about.

Second Girl. Your pardon.

[LEONARDO crosses at the rear of the stage.]

Bride. [She sees LEONARDO.] And this is an upsetting time.

First Girl. We wouldn't know anything about that!

Bride. You'll know about it when your time comes. This step is a very hard one to take.

First Girl. Has she offended you?

Bride. No. You must pardon me.

Second Girl. What for? But both the pins are good for getting married, aren't they?

Bride. Both of them.

First Girl. Maybe now one will get married before the other.

Bride. Are you so eager?

Second Girl. [Shyly.] Yes.

Bride. Why?

First Girl. Well . . .

[She embraces THE SECOND GIRL. Both go running off. THE GROOM comes in very slowly and embraces THE BRIDE from behind.]

Bride. [In sudden fright.] Let go of me!

Bridegroom. Are you frightened of me?

Bride. Ay-y-y! It's you?

Bridegroom. Who else would it be? [Pause.] Your father or me.

Bride. That's true!

Bridegroom. Of course, your father would have hugged you more gently.

Bride. [Darkly.] Of course!

Bridegroom. [Embracing her strongly and a little bit brusquely.] Because he's old.

Bride. [Curtly.] Let me go!

Bridegroom. Why? [He lets her go.]

Bride. Well . . . the people. They can see us.

[THE SERVANT crosses at the back of the stage again without looking at THE BRIDE and BRIDEGROOM.]

Bridegroom. What of it? It's consecrated now.

Bride. Yes, but let me be . . . Later.
Bridegroom. What's the matter with you?
 You look frightened!

Bride. I'm all right. Don't go.

Leonardo's Wife. [*Enters.*] I don't mean to intrude . . .

Bridegroom. What is it?

Leonardo's Wife. Did my husband come through here?

Bridegroom. No.

Leonardo's Wife. Because I can't find him, and his horse isn't in the stable either.

Bridegroom. [*Happily.*] He must be out racing it.

[*THE WIFE leaves, troubled. THE SERVANT enters.*]

Servant. Aren't you two proud and happy with so many good wishes?

Bridegroom. I wish it were over with. The bride is a little tired.

Servant. That's no way to act, child.

Bride. It's as though I'd been struck on the head.

Servant. A bride from these mountains must be strong. [*To THE GROOM.*] You're the only one who can cure her, because she's yours. [*She goes running off.*]

Bridegroom. [*Embracing THE BRIDE.*] Let's go dance a little. [*He kisses her.*]

Bride. [*Worried.*] No. I'd like to stretch out on my bed a little.

Bridegroom. I'll keep you company.

Bride. Never! With all these people here? What would they say? Let me be quiet for a moment.

Bridegroom. Whatever you say! But don't be like that tonight!

Bride. [*At the door.*] I'll be better tonight.

Bridegroom. That's what I want.

[*THE MOTHER appears.*]

Mother. Son.

Bridegroom. Where've you been?

Mother. Out there—in all that noise. Are you happy?

Bridegroom. Yes.

Mother. Where's your wife?

Bridegroom. Resting a little. It's a bad day for brides!

Mother. A bad day? The only good one. To me it was like coming into my own. [*THE SERVANT enters and goes toward THE BRIDE'S room.*] Like the breaking of new ground; the planting of new trees.

Bridegroom. Are you going to leave?

Mother. Yes. I ought to be at home.

Bridegroom. Alone.

Mother. Not alone. For my head is full of things: of men, and fights.

Bridegroom. But now the fights are no longer fights.

[*THE SERVANT enters quickly; she disappears at the rear of the stage, running.*]

Mother. While you live, you have to fight.

Bridegroom. I'll always obey you!

Mother. Try to be loving with your wife, and if you see she's acting foolish or touchy, caress her in a way that will hurt her a little: a strong hug, a bite and then a soft kiss. Not so she'll be angry, but just so she'll feel you're the man, the boss, the one who gives orders. I learned that from your father. And since you don't have him, I have to be the one to tell you about these strong defenses.

Bridegroom. I'll always do as you say.

Father. [*Entering.*] Where's my daughter?

Bridegroom. She's inside.

[*THE FATHER goes to look for her.*]

First Girl. Get the bride and groom! We're going to dance a round!

First Youth. [*To THE BRIDEGROOM.*] You're going to lead it.

Father. [*Entering.*] She's not there.

Bridegroom. No?

Father. She must have gone up to the railing.

Bridegroom. I'll go see!

[*He leaves. A hubbub of excitement and guitars is heard.*]

First Girl. They've started it already! [*She leaves.*]

Bridegroom. [*Entering.*] She isn't there.

Mother. [*Uneasily.*] Isn't she?

Father. But where could she have gone?

Servant. [*Entering.*] But where's the girl, where is she?

Mother. [*Seriously.*] That we don't know.

[*THE BRIDEGROOM leaves. Three GUESTS enter.*]

Father. [*Dramatically.*] But, isn't she in the dance?

Servant. She's not in the dance.

Father. [*With a start.*] There are a lot of people. Go look!

Servant. I've already looked.

Father. [*Tragically.*] Then where is she?

Bridegroom. [*Entering.*] Nowhere. Not anywhere.

Mother. [*To THE FATHER.*] What does this mean? Where is your daughter?

[*LEONARDO'S WIFE enters.*]

Leonardo's Wife. They've run away! They've run away! She and Leonardo. On the horse. With their arms around each other, they rode off like a shooting star!

Father. That's not true! Not my daughter!

Mother. Yes, your daughter! Spawn of

a wicked mother, and he, he too. But now she's my son's wife!

Bridegroom. Let's go after them! Who has a horse?

Mother. Who has a horse? Right away! Who has a horse? I'll give him all I have—my eyes, my tongue even. . . .

Voice. Here's one.

Mother. [To THE SON.] Go! After them! [He leaves with two YOUNG MEN.] No. Don't go. Those people kill quickly and well . . . but yes, run, and I'll follow!

Father. It couldn't be my daughter. Perhaps she's thrown herself in the well.

Mother. Decent women throw themselves in water; not that one! But now she's my son's wife. Two groups. There are two groups here. [They all enter.] My family and yours. Everyone set out from here. Shake the dust from your heels! We'll go help my son. [The PEOPLE separate into two groups.] For he has his family: his cousins from the sea, and all who came from inland. Out of here! On all roads. The hour of blood has come again. Two groups! You with yours and I with mine. After them! After them!

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE I

A forest. It is nighttime. Great moist tree trunks. A dark atmosphere.

[Two violins are heard. THREE WOODCUTTERS enter.]

First Woodcutter. And have they found them?

Second Woodcutter. No. But they're looking for them everywhere.

Third Woodcutter. They'll find them.

Second Woodcutter. Sh-h-h!

Third Woodcutter. What?

Second Woodcutter. They seem to be coming closer on all the roads at once.

First Woodcutter. When the moon comes out they'll see them.

Second Woodcutter. They ought to let them go.

First Woodcutter. The world is wide. Everybody can live in it.

Third Woodcutter. But they'll kill them.

Second Woodcutter. You have to follow your passion. They did right to run away.

First Woodcutter. They were deceiving themselves but at the last blood was stronger.

Third Woodcutter. Blood!

First Woodcutter. You have to follow the path of your blood.

Second Woodcutter. But blood that sees the light of day is drunk up by the earth.

First Woodcutter. What of it? Better dead with the blood drained away than alive with it rotting.

Third Woodcutter. Hush!

First Woodcutter. What? Do you hear something?

Third Woodcutter. I hear the crickets, the frogs, the night's ambush.

First Woodcutter. But not the horse.

Third Woodcutter. No.

First Woodcutter. By now he must be loving her.

Second Woodcutter. Her body for him; his body for her.

Third Woodcutter. They'll find them and they'll kill them.

First Woodcutter. But by then they'll have mingled their bloods. They'll be like two empty jars, like two dry arroyos.

Second Woodcutter. There are many clouds and it would be easy for the moon not to come out.

Third Woodcutter. The bridegroom will find them with or without the moon. I saw him set out. Like a raging star. His face the color of ashes. He looked the fate of all his clan.

First Woodcutter. His clan of dead men lying in the middle of the street.

Second Woodcutter. There you have it!

Third Woodcutter. You think they'll be able to break through the circle?

Second Woodcutter. It's hard to. There are knives and guns for ten leagues 'round.

Third Woodcutter. He's riding a good horse.

Second Woodcutter. But he's carrying a woman.

First Woodcutter. We're close by now.

Second Woodcutter. A tree with forty branches. We'll soon cut it down.

Third Woodcutter. The moon's coming out now. Let's hurry.

[From the left shines a brightness.]

First Woodcutter.

O rising moon!

Moon among the great leaves.

Second Woodcutter.

Cover the blood with jasmines!

First Woodcutter.

O lonely moon!

Moon among the great leaves.

Second Woodcutter.

Silver on the bride's face.

Third Woodcutter.

O evil moon!

Leave for their love a branch in shadow.

First Woodcutter.

O sorrowing moon!

Leave for their love a branch in shadow.

[*They go out. THE MOON appears through the shining brightness at the left. THE MOON is a young woodcutter with a white face. The stage takes on an intense blue radiance.*]

Moon.

Round swan in the river
and a cathedral's eye,
false dawn on the leaves,
they'll not escape; these things am I!
Who is hiding? And who sobs
in the thornbrakes of the valley?
The moon sets a knife
abandoned in the air
which being a leaden threat
yearns to be blood's pain.
Let me in! I come freezing
down to walls and windows!
Open roofs, open breasts
where I may warm myself!
I'm cold! My ashes
of somnolent metals
seek the fire's crest
on mountains and streets.
But the snow carries me
upon its mottled back
and pools soak me
in their water, hard and cold.
But this night there will be
red blood for my cheeks,
and for the reeds that cluster
at the wide feet of the wind.
Let there be neither shadow nor bower,
and then they can't get away!
O let me enter a breast
where I may get warm!
A heart for me!
Warm! That will spurt
over the mountains of my chest;
let me come in, oh let me!

[*To the branches.*]

I want no shadows. My rays
must get in everywhere,
even among the dark trunks I want
the whisper of gleaming lights,
so that this night there will be
sweet blood for my cheeks,
and for the reeds that cluster

at the wide feet of the wind.

Who is hiding? Out, I say!

No! They will not get away!

I will light up the horse

with a fever bright as diamonds.

[*He disappears among the trunks, and the stage goes back to its dark lighting.*]

An OLD WOMAN comes out completely covered by thin green cloth. She is barefooted. Her face can barely be seen among the folds.]

Beggar Woman.

That moon's going away, just when they're near.

They won't get past here. The river's whisper

and the whispering tree trunks will muffle

the torn flight of their shrieks.

It has to be here, and soon. I'm worn out.

The coffins are ready, and white sheets wait on the floor of the bedroom for heavy bodies with torn throats.

Let not one bird awake, let the breeze, gathering their moans in her skirt, fly with them over black tree tops or bury them in soft mud.

[*Impatiently.*]

Oh, that moon! That moon!

[*THE MOON appears. The intense blue light returns.*]

Moon. They're coming. One band through the ravine and the other along the river. I'm going to light up the boulders. What do you need?

Beggar Woman. Nothing.

Moon. The wind blows hard now, with a double edge.

Beggar Woman. Light up the waistcoat and open the buttons; the knives will know the path after that.

Moon.

But let them be a long time a-dying.

So the blood

will slide its delicate hissing between my fingers.

Look how my ashen valleys already are waking

in longing for this fountain of shuddering gushes!

Beggar Woman. Let's not let them past the arroyo. Silence!

Moon. There they come!

[*He goes. The stage is left dark.*]

Beggar Woman. Quick! Lots of light! Do you hear me? They can't get away!

[*THE BRIDEGROOM and THE FIRST YOUTH enter. THE BEGGAR WOMAN sits down and covers herself with her cloak.*]

Bridegroom. This way.

First Youth. You won't find them.

Bridegroom. [*Angrily.*] Yes, I'll find them.

First Youth. I think they've taken another path.

Bridegroom. No. Just a moment ago I felt the galloping.

First Youth. It could have been another horse.

Bridegroom. [*Intensely.*] Listen to me. There's only one horse in the whole world, and this one's it. Can't you understand that? If you're going to follow me, follow me without talking.

First Youth. It's only that I want to . . .

Bridegroom. Be quiet. I'm sure of meeting them there. Do you see this arm? Well, it's not my arm. It's my brother's arm, and my father's, and that of all the dead ones in my family. And it has so much strength that it can pull this tree up by the roots, if it wants to. And let's move on, because here I feel the clenched teeth of all my people in me so that I can't breathe easily.

Beggar Woman. [*Whining.*] Ay-y-y!

First Youth. Did you hear that?

Bridegroom. You go that way and then circle back.

First Youth. This is a hunt.

Bridegroom. A hunt. The greatest hunt there is.

[THE YOUTH goes off. THE BRIDEGROOM goes rapidly to the left and stumbles over THE BEGGAR WOMAN, DEATH.]

Beggar Woman. Ay-y-y!

Bridegroom. What do you want?

Beggar Woman. I'm cold.

Bridegroom. Which way are you going?

Beggar Woman. [*Always whining like a beggar.*] Over there, far away . . .

Bridegroom. Where are you from?

Beggar Woman. Over there . . . very far away.

Bridegroom. Have you seen a man and a woman running away on a horse?

Beggar Woman. [*Awakening.*] Wait a minute . . . [*She looks at him.*] Handsome young man. [*She rises.*] But you'd be much handsomer sleeping.

Bridegroom. Tell me; answer me. Did you see them?

Beggar Woman. Wait a minute . . . What broad shoulders! How would you like to be laid out on them and not have to walk on the soles of your feet which are so small?

Bridegroom. [*Shaking her.*] I asked you if you saw them! Have they passed through here?

Beggar Woman. [*Energetically.*] No.

They haven't passed; but they're coming from the hill. Don't you hear them?

Bridegroom. No.

Beggar Woman. Do you know the road?

Bridegroom. I'll go, whatever it's like!

Beggar Woman. I'll go along with you. I know this country.

Bridegroom. [*Impatiently.*] Well, let's go! Which way?

Beggar Woman. [*Dramatically.*] This way!

[*They go rapidly out. Two violins, which represent the forest, are heard distantly. THE WOODCUTTERS return. They have their axes on their shoulders. They move slowly among the tree trunks.*]

First Woodcutter.

O rising death!

Death among the great leaves.

Second Woodcutter.

Don't open the gush of blood!

First Woodcutter.

O lonely death!

Death among the dried leaves.

Third Woodcutter.

Don't lay flowers over the wedding!

Second Woodcutter.

O sad death!

Leave for their love a green branch.

First Woodcutter.

O evil death!

Leave for their love a branch of green!

[*They go out while they are talking.*

LEONARDO and THE BRIDE appear.]

Leonardo.

Hush!

Bride.

From here I'll go on alone.

You go now! I want you to turn back.

Leonardo.

Hush, I said!

Bride.

With your teeth, with your hands, anyway you can,

take from my clean throat

the metal of this chain,

and let me live forgotten

back there in my house in the ground.

And if you don't want to kill me

as you would kill a tiny snake,

set in my hands, a bride's hands,

the barrel of your shotgun.

Oh, what lamenting, what fire,

sweeps upward through my head!

What glass splinters are stuck in my tongue!

Leonardo.

We've taken the step now; hush!

because they're close behind us,

and I must take you with me.

Bride.

Then it must be by force!

Leonardo.

By force? Who was it first
went down the stairway?

Bride.

I went down it.

Leonardo.

And who was it put
a new bridle on the horse?

Bride.

I myself did it. It's true.

Leonardo.

And whose were the hands
strapped spurs to my boots?

Bride.

The same hands, these that are yours,
but which when they see you would like
to break the blue branches
and sunder the purl of your veins.
I love you! I love you! But leave me!
For if I were able to kill you
I'd wrap you 'round in a shroud
with the edges bordered in violets.
Oh, what lamenting, what fire,
sweeps upward through my head!

Leonardo.

What glass splinters are stuck in my
tongue!

Because I tried to forget you
and put a wall of stone
between your house and mine.
It's true. You remember?
And when I saw you in the distance
I threw sand in my eyes.
But I was riding a horse
and the horse went straight to your
door.

And the silver pins of your wedding
turned my red blood black.
And in me our dream was choking
my flesh with its poisoned weeds.
Oh, it isn't my fault—
the fault is the earth's—
and this fragrance that you exhale
from your breasts and your braids.

Bride.

Oh, how untrue! I want
from you neither bed nor food,
yet there's not a minute each day
that I don't want to be with you,
because you drag me, and I come,
then you tell me to go back
and I follow you,
like chaff blown on the breeze.
I have left a good, honest man,
and all his people,
with the wedding feast half over
and wearing my bridal wreath.
But you are the one will be punished
and that I don't want to happen.

Leave me alone now! You run away!
There is no one who will defend you.

Leonardo.

The birds of early morning
are calling among the trees.
The night is dying
on the stone's ridge.
Let's go to a hidden corner
where I may love you forever,
for to me the people don't matter,
nor the venom they throw on us.
[*He embraces her strongly.*]

Bride.

And I'll sleep at your feet,
to watch over your dreams.
Naked, looking over the fields,
as though I were a bitch.
Because that's what I am! Oh, I look
at you
and your beauty sears me.

Leonardo.

Fire is stirred by fire.
The same tiny flame
will kill two wheat heads together.
Let's go!

Bride.

Where are you taking me?

Leonardo.

Where they cannot come,
these men who surround us.
Where I can look at you!

Bride. [*Sarcastically.*]

Carry me with you from fair to fair,
a shame to clean women,
so that people will see me
with my wedding sheets
on the breeze like banners.

Leonardo.

I, too, would want to leave you
if I thought as men should.
But wherever you go, I go.
You're the same. Take a step. Try.
Nails of moonlight have fused
my waist and your chains.
[*This whole scene is violent, full of
great sensuality.*]

Bride.

Listen!

Leonardo.

They're coming.

Bride.

Run!

It's fitting that I should die here,
with water over my feet,
with thorns upon my head.
And fitting the leaves should mourn me,
a woman lost and virgin.

Leonardo.

Be quiet. Now they're appearing.

Bride.

Go now!

Leonardo.

Quiet. Don't let them hear us.

[THE BRIDE hesitates.]

Bride.

Both of us!

Leonardo. [Embracing her.]

Any way you want!

If they separate us, it will be
because I am dead.

Bride.

And I dead too.

[They go out in each other's arms. THE

MOON appears very slowly. The stage takes on a strong blue light. The two violins are heard. Suddenly two long, ear-splitting shrieks are heard, and the music of the two violins is cut short. At the second shriek THE BEGGAR WOMAN appears and stands with her back to the audience. She opens her cape and stands in the center of the stage like a great bird with immense wings. THE MOON halts. The curtain comes down in absolute silence.]

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE II

The Final Scene

A white dwelling with arches and thick walls. To the right and left, are white stairs. At the back, a great arch and a wall of the same color. The floor also should be shining white. This simple dwelling should have the monumental feeling of a church. There should not be a single gray nor any shadow, not even what is necessary for perspective.
[TWO GIRLS dressed in dark blue are winding a red skein.]

First Girl.

Wool, red wool,
what would you make?

Second Girl.

Oh, jasmine for dresses,
fine wool like glass.
At four o'clock born,
at ten o'clock dead.
A thread from this wool yarn,
a chain 'round your feet
a knot that will tighten
the bitter white wreath.

Little Girl. [Singing.]

Were you at the wedding?

First Girl.

No.

Little Girl.

Well, neither was I!
What could have happened
'midst the shoots of the vineyards?
What could have happened
'neath the branch of the olive?
What really happened
that no one came back?
Were you at the wedding?

Second Girl.

We told you once, no.

Little Girl. [Leaving.]

Well, neither was I!

Second Girl.

Wool, red wool,
what would you sing?

First Girl.

Their wounds turning waxen
balm-myrtle for pain.
Asleep in the morning,
and watching at night.

Little Girl. [In the doorway.]

And then, the thread stumbled
on the flinty stones,
but mountains, blue mountains,
are letting it pass.
Running, running, running,
and finally to come
to stick in a knife blade,
to take back the bread. [She goes out.]

Second Girl.

Wool, red wool,
what would you tell?

First Girl.

The lover is silent,
crimson the groom,
at the still shoreline
I saw them laid out.

[She stops and looks at the skein.]

Little Girl. [Appearing in the doorway.]

Running, running, running,
the thread runs to here.
All covered with clay
I feel them draw near.
Bodies stretched stiffly
in ivory sheets!

[THE WIFE and MOTHER-IN-LAW of
LEONARDO appear. They are anguished.]

First Girl. Are they coming yet?

Mother-in-law. [*Harshly.*] We don't know.

Second Girl. What can you tell us about the wedding?

First Girl. Yes, tell me.

Mother-in-law. [*Curtly.*] Nothing.

Leonardo's Wife. I want to go back and find out all about it.

Mother-in-law. [*Sternly.*]

You, back to your house.

Brave and alone in your house.

To grow old and to weep.

But behind closed doors.

Never again. Neither dead nor alive.

We'll nail up our windows

and let rains and nights

fall on the bitter weeds.

Leonardo's Wife. What could have happened?

Mother-in-law.

It doesn't matter what.

Put a veil over your face.

Your children are yours,

that's all. On the bed

put a cross of ashes

where his pillow was. [*They go out.*]

Beggar Woman. [*At the door.*] A crust of bread, little girls.

Little Girl. Go away!

[*THE GIRLS huddle close together.*]

Beggar Woman. Why?

Little Girl. Because you whine; go away!

First Girl. Child!

Beggar Woman.

I might have asked for your eyes! A cloud

of birds is following me. Will you have one?

Little Girl. I want to get away from here!

Second Girl. [*To THE BEGGAR WOMAN.*] Don't mind her!

First Girl. Did you come by the road through the arroyo?

Beggar Woman. I came that way!

First Girl. [*Timidly.*] Can I ask you something?

Beggar Woman.

I saw them: they'll be here soon; two torrents

still at last, among the great boulders, two men at the horse's feet.

Two dead men in the night's splendor.

[*With pleasure.*]

Dead, yes, dead.

First Girl. Hush, old woman, hush!

Beggar Woman.

Crushed flowers for eyes, and their teeth

two fistfuls of hard-frozen snow.

Both of them fell, and the Bride returns with bloodstains on her skirt and hair.

And they come covered with two sheets carried on the shoulders of two tall boys. That's how it was; nothing more. What

was fitting.

Over the golden flower, dirty sand.

[*She goes.* *THE GIRLS bow their heads and start going out rhythmically.*]

First Girl.

Dirty sand.

Second Girl.

Over the golden flower.

Little Girl.

Over the golden flower

they're bringing the dead from the arroyo.

Dark the one,

dark the other.

What shadowy nightingale flies and weeps over the golden flower!

[*She goes. The stage is left empty.*]

THE MOTHER and a NEIGHBOR WOMAN appear. THE NEIGHBOR is weeping.]

Mother. Hush.

Neighbor. I can't.

Mother. Hush, I said. [*At the door.*] Is there nobody here? [*She puts her hands to her forehead.*] My son ought to answer me. But now my son is an armful of shrivelled flowers. My son is a fading voice beyond the mountains now. [*With rage, to THE NEIGHBOR.*] Will you shut up? I want no wailing in this house. Your tears are only tears from your eyes, but when I'm alone mine will come—from the soles of my feet, from my roots—burning more than blood.

Neighbor. You come to my house; don't you stay here.

Mother. I want to be here. Here. In peace. They're all dead now: and at midnight I'll sleep, sleep without terror of guns or knives. Other mothers will go to their windows, lashed by rain, to watch for their sons' faces. But not I. And of my dreams I'll make a cold ivory dove that will carry camellias of white frost to the graveyard. But no; not graveyard, not graveyard: the couch of earth, the bed that shelters them and rocks them in the sky. [*A WOMAN dressed in black enters, goes toward the right, and there kneels. To THE NEIGHBOR.*] Take your hands from your face. We have terrible days ahead. I want to see no one. The earth and I. My grief and I. And these four walls. Ay-y-y! Ay-y-y!

[*She sits down, overcome.*]

Neighbor. Take pity on yourself!

Mother. [*Pushing back her hair.*] I must be calm. [*She sits down.*] Because the

neighbor women will come and I don't want them to see me so poor. So poor! A woman without even one son to hold to her lips.

[THE BRIDE appears. She is without her wreath and wears a black shawl.]

Neighbor. [With rage, seeing THE BRIDE.] Where are you going?

Bride. I'm coming here.

Mother. [TO THE NEIGHBOR.] Who is it? Neighbor. Don't you recognize her?

Mother. That's why I asked who it was. Because I don't want to recognize her, so I won't sink my teeth in her throat. You snake! [She moves wrathfully on THE BRIDE, then stops. TO THE NEIGHBOR.] Look at her! There she is, and she's crying, while I stand here calmly and don't tear her eyes out. I don't understand myself. Can it be I didn't love my son? But where's his good name? Where is it now? Where is it?

[She beats THE BRIDE who drops to the floor.]

Neighbor. For God's sake!

[She tries to separate them.]

Bride. [TO THE NEIGHBOR.] Let her; I came here so she'd kill me and they'd take me away with them. [TO THE MOTHER.] But not with her hands; with grappling hooks, with a sickle—and with force—until they break on my bones. Let her! I want her to know I'm clean, that I may be crazy, but that they can bury me without a single man ever having seen himself in the whiteness of my breasts.

Mother. Shut up, shut up; what do I care about that?

Bride. Because I ran away with the other one; I ran away. [With anguish.] You would have gone, too. I was a woman burning with desire, full of sores inside and out, and your son was a little bit of water from which I hoped for children, land, health; but the other one was a dark river, choked with brush, that brought near me the undertone of its rushes and its whispered song. And I went along with your son who was like a little boy of cold water—and the other sent against me hundreds of birds who got in my way and left white frost on my wounds, my wounds of a poor withered woman, of a girl caressed by fire. I didn't want to; remember that! I didn't want to. Your son was my destiny and I have not betrayed him, but the other one's arm dragged me along like the pull of the sea, like the head toss of a mule, and he would have dragged me always, always, always—even if I were an old woman and all your son's sons held me by the hair! [A NEIGHBOR enters.]

Mother. She is not to blame; nor am I!

[Sarcastically.] Who is, then? It's a delicate, lazy, sleepless woman who throws away an orange blossom wreath and goes looking for a piece of bed warmed by another woman!

Bride. Be still! Be still! Take your revenge on me; here I am! See how soft my throat is; it would be less work for you than cutting a dahlia in your garden. But never that! Clean, clean as a new-born little girl. And strong enough to prove it to you. Light the fire. Let's stick our hands in; you, for your son, I, for my body. You'll draw yours out first. [ANOTHER NEIGHBOR enters.]

Mother. But what does your good name matter to me? What does your death matter to me? What does anything about anything matter to me? Blesséd be the wheat stalks, because my sons are under them; blesséd be the rain, because it wets the face of the dead. Blesséd be God, who stretches us out together to rest.

[ANOTHER NEIGHBOR enters.]

Bride. Let me weep with you.

Mother. Weep. But at the door.

[THE LITTLE GIRL enters. THE BRIDE stays at the door. THE MOTHER is at the center of the stage.]

Leonardo's Wife. [Entering and going to the left.]

He was a beautiful horseman,
now he's a heap of snow.
He rode to fairs and mountains
and women's arms.
Now, the night's dark moss
crowns his forehead.

Mother.

A sunflower to your mother,
a mirror of the earth.
Let them put on your breast
the cross of bitter rosebay;
and over you a sheet
of shining silk;
between your quiet hands
let water form its lament.

Wife.

Ay-y-y, four gallant boys
come with tired shoulders!

Bride.

Ay-y-y, four gallant boys
carry death on high!

Mother.

Neighbors.

Little Girl. [At the door.]

They're bringing them now.

Mother.

It's the same thing.

Always the cross, the cross.

Women.

Sweet nails,

cross adored,
sweet name
of Christ our Lord.

Bride. May the cross protect both the
quick and the dead.

Mother.

Neighbors: with a knife,
with a little knife,
on their appointed day, between two and
three,
these two men killed each other for
love.

With a knife,
with a tiny knife
that barely fits the hand,
but that slides in clean
through the astonished flesh
and stops at the place
where trembles, enmeshed,
the dark root of a scream.

Bride.

And this is a knife,
a tiny knife
that barely fits the hand;
fish without scales, without river,
so that on their appointed day, between
two and three,
with this knife,
two men are left stiff,
with their lips turning yellow.

Mother.

And it barely fits the hand
but it slides in clean
through the astonished flesh
and stops there, at the place
where trembles enmeshed
the dark root of a scream.
[THE NEIGHBORS, *kneeling on the floor,*
sob.]

CURTAIN

MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL*

By
T. S. ELIOT

TS. ELIOT'S COMMANDING POSITION among twentieth-century writers in English of poetry and literary criticism is not duplicated in the drama. By reason of his eminence in those other endeavors he has a following in the theatre, especially among the intellectuals and academics. But they are notoriously few and notoriously undependable in loyalty, though undoubtedly very influential. The theatre-going public at large has made a commercial success of only one of his plays, *The Cocktail Party*, and he himself is reported to have thought its success due to the title and the fad. Nevertheless, Eliot stands for something unique and admirable in contemporary drama, and a sympathetic study of his work should lead to the hope that he will continue to write for the theatre and will come to have an influence on it approaching his influence on the poetry of his day.

But Eliot, if he continues to write for the theatre, will not, apparently, seek to "bring poetry into" it. That is, he will not wish to make his audiences aware that they are hearing verse. Instead, he will try to write lines of such loose rhythm and cadence that they will sound like prose and be uttered by the actor like prose, yet have an unconscious effect upon both actor and audience which arises from the dramatic intensification poetry gives. But he believes this verse should never call attention to itself as poetry. The test of every line is not its poetry, but its dramatic relevance.

Murder in the Cathedral, clearly, is not written according to Eliot's program for his future plays. In his *Poetry and Drama*, Eliot writes of *Murder in the Cathedral* as if it were his first play and ignores *Sweeney Agonistes* and *The Rock*. He asserts that *Murder in the Cathedral* had advantages not found for most plays: a remote period, which allowed the characters to be repre-

sented as speaking verse; a special audience, since the play was written for the Canterbury Festival of 1935; and its religious occasion, which permitted a religious play. It had the disadvantage of a very limited plot: Becket returns to Canterbury, foreseeing that he will be murdered, and is murdered. By both advantage and disadvantage Eliot was led to rely heavily upon the use of the chorus, who could express the suffering caused by Becket's danger and martyrdom and thereby help lift the murder from a drab brutality to significance. But that significance should be given by a chorus rather than by the action itself came to seem wrong to Eliot, and though he used a chorus in his next play, *The Family Reunion*, he abandoned it thereafter.

Eliot claims that *The Family Reunion*, though he thinks it a failure, solved for him the problem of versification. The obvious poetry of *Murder in the Cathedral* is given up; the verse sounds like contemporary speech and the actor should try to speak it with the utmost naturalness.

Murder in the Cathedral is the only Eliot play he will allow to be anthologized, and yet, as his history in the theatre shows, he thinks it most unlike what he would wish to write for the theatre.

Nevertheless, *Murder in the Cathedral* will serve adequately to represent Eliot's realst virtue in the drama. That is not in his verse, or in chorus or no-chorus, or in any detail of technique. When we first read *Gerontion* or *Ash Wednesday* we probably did not understand it, but if we were sensitive at all we felt that Eliot had something fresh and important to say there and that it was said with power, even if all the power could not be felt immediately. Except perhaps for *Sweeney Agonistes* and *The Rock*, the same quality inheres in *Murder in the Cathedral* and in all Eliot's plays. They are important plays, not because Eliot is eminent, a poet, or the foremost living critic, but because of what they are and say.

Does Eliot have little confidence in his

* Reprinted by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company.

powers of narrative construction? The plots of all his plays after *Murder in the Cathedral*, which is drawn from history, rely on Greek drama for considerable suggestion: *The Family Reunion* on the *Eumenides* of Aeschylus, *The Cocktail Party* on the *Alcestis* of Euripides, *The Confidential Clerk* on the *Ion* of Euripides. The question seems to raise a serious issue, but actually does not. Eliot himself has usually had to indicate his sources—they are not obvious to even the learned critic. What happens, apparently, is that Eliot broods on an ancient

play or event, transforms it deliberately in his imagination into a new pattern of contemporary meaning. The richness and importance of what he says may derive from this process, which also creates what seems and is fresh.

Readers of *Murder in the Cathedral*, unless very familiar with the effects that can be produced by a verse-speaking choir, will have difficulty imagining how the choruses sound unless they listen carefully to the admirable recording of the play made by the Old Vic Theatre, London.

THOMAS STEARNS ELIOT

Born 1888, St. Louis, Missouri.

B.A., Harvard, 1910; M.A., 1911.

1910–1915, Graduate study in philosophy abroad and at Harvard, and some teaching.

1916–1925, Work in a bank, writing, and editing, in London.

1922, Publication of *The Waste Land* establishes his reputation as poet.

1925– , Employed by Faber and Faber, London publishers.

1927, Becomes member of the Church of England and a British citizen.

1948, Awarded Nobel Prize for Literature and appointed to the Order of Merit.

PLAYS

1932 *Sweeney Agonistes: Fragments of an Aristophanic Melodrama*. 1934 *The Rock, a Pageant Play*. 1935 *Murder in the Cathedral*. 1939 *The Family Reunion*. 1950 *The Cocktail Party*. 1953 *The Confidential Clerk*. 1958 *The Elder Statesman*.

WRITINGS ON DRAMA

"Whether Rostand Had Something about Him," *Athenaeum*, No. 4656, July 25, 1919. "Swinburne and the Elizabethans," *Athenaeum*, No. 4664, Sept. 19, 1919. "The Comedy of Humours," *Athenaeum*, No. 4672, Nov. 14, 1919. From *The Sacred Wood*, 1920: "The Possibility of Poetic Drama"; "Euripides and Professor Murray"; "Rhetoric and Poetic Drama"; "Notes on the Blank Verse of Christopher Marlowe"; "Hamlet and His Problems"; "Ben Jonson"; "Philip Massinger." "The Poetic Drama," *Athenaeum*, No. 4698, May 14, 1920. "The

Old Comedy," *Athenaeum*, No. 4702, June 11, 1920. "Dramatis Personae," *The Criterion*, I (April 1923), 303–306. Review of Mr. Shaw and 'The Maid,' by J. M. Robertson, *The Criterion*, IV (April 1926), 389–390. Review of *All God's Chillun Got Wings, Desire under the Elms*, and *Welded*, by Eugene O'Neill, *The Criterion*, IV (April 1926), 395–396. 1927 *Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca*. Review of *The Complete Works of John Webster*, edited by F. L. Lucas, *The Criterion*, VII (June 1928), 155–158. Review of *Ben Jonson*, edited by C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson, *The Dial*, LXXXV (July 1928), 65–68. From *For Lancelot Andrewes*, 1928: "Thomas Middleton." 1930 Introduction to *The Wheel of Fire*, by G. Wilson Knight. From *Selected Essays 1917–1932*, 1932 (not including those listed above): "A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry"; "Seneca in Elizabethan Translation"; "Four Elizabethan Dramatists"; "Christopher Marlowe"; "Thomas Heywood"; "Cyril Tourneur"; "John Ford." *John Dryden, the*

Poet, the Dramatist, the Critic. 1934 A letter to the Editor of *The Spectator*, No. 5528, June 8, 1934, about *The Rock*. "Shakespearean Criticism from Dryden to Coleridge" in *A Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, ed. by Harley Granville-Barker and G. B. Harrison.

From *Elizabethan Essays* (not including those listed above): "John Marston." 1936 A review of *Shakespeare*, by J. M. Murry, *The Criterion*, XV (July 1936), 708-710. 1943 Introduction to *Shakespeare and the*

Popular Dramatic Tradition, by S. L. Bethell. 1949 *The Aims of Poetic Drama*, revised and republished in 1951 as *Poetry and Drama*. 1953 *The Three Voices of Poetry*. 1953 Introduction to *Shakespeare*, by Henri Fluchère. 1954 *Religious Drama, Medieval and Modern*.

SCREENWRITING

1951 *Murder in the Cathedral*.

MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL

PART I

Characters

A CHORUS OF WOMEN OF CANTERBURY.
THREE PRIESTS OF THE CATHEDRAL.
A HERALD.
ARCHBISHOP THOMAS BECKET.
FOUR TEMPTERS.

ATTENDANTS.

*The Scene is the Archbishop's Hall, on
December 2nd, 1170.*

Chorus. Here let us stand, close by the
cathedral. Here let us wait.

Are we drawn by danger? Is it the knowl-
edge of safety, that draws our feet

Towards the cathedral? What danger can
be

For us, the poor, the poor women of Can-
terbury? what tribulation

With which we are not already familiar?
There is no danger

For us, and there is no safety in the cathe-
dral. Some presage of an act

Which our eyes are compelled to witness,
has forced our feet

Towards the cathedral. We are forced to
bear witness.

Since golden October declined into sombre
November

And the apples were gathered and stored,
and the land became brown sharp
points of death in a waste of water
and mud,

The New Year waits, breathes, waits,
whispers in darkness.

While the labourer kicks off a muddy boot
and stretches his hand to the fire,

The New Year waits, destiny waits for the
coming.

Who has stretched out his hand to the fire
and remembered the Saints at All
Hallows,

Remembered the martyrs and saints who
wait? and who shall

Stretch out his hand to the fire, and deny
his master? who shall be warm

By the fire, and deny his master?

Seven years and the summer is over

Seven years since the Archbishop left us,

He who was always kind to his people.

But it would not be well if he should re-
turn.

King rules or barons rule;

We have suffered various oppression,

But mostly we are left to our own de-
vices,

And we are content if we are left alone.

We try to keep our households in order;

The merchant, shy and cautious, tries to
compile a little fortune,

And the labourer bends to his piece of
earth, earth-colour, his own colour,

Preferring to pass unobserved.

Now I fear disturbance of the quiet sea-
sons:

Winter shall come bringing death from the
sea,

Ruinous spring shall beat at our doors,

Root and shoot shall eat our eyes and our
ears,

Disastrous summer burn up the beds of
our streams

And the poor shall wait for another decay-
ing October.

Why should the summer bring consol-
ation

For autumn fires and winter fogs?

What shall we do in the heat of summer

But wait in barren orchards for another
October?

Some malady is coming upon us. We wait,
we wait,

And the saints and martyrs wait, for those
who shall be martyrs and saints.

Destiny waits in the hand of God, shap-
ing the still unshapen:

I have seen these things in a shaft of sun-
light.

Destiny waits in the hand of God, not in
the hands of statesmen

Who do, some well, some ill, planning and guessing,
Having their aims which turn in their hands in the pattern of time.

Come, happy December, who shall observe you, who shall preserve you?
Shall the Son of Man be born again in the litter of scorn?

For us, the poor, there is no action,
But only to wait and to witness.

[Enter PRIESTS.]

First Priest. Seven years and the summer is over.

Seven years since the Archbishop left us.

Second Priest. What does the Archbishop do, and our Sovereign Lord the Pope

With the stubborn King and the French King

In ceaseless intrigue, combinations,
In conference, meetings accepted, meetings refused,

Meetings unended or endless
At one place or another in France?

Third Priest. I see nothing quite conclusive in the art of temporal government,
But violence, duplicity and frequent malversation.

King rules or barons rule:

The strong man strongly and the weak man by caprice.

They have but one law, to seize the power and keep it,

And the steadfast can manipulate the greed and lust of others,

The feeble is devoured by his own.

First Priest. Shall these things not end
Until the poor at the gate

Have forgotten their friend, their Father in God, have forgotten

That they had a friend?

[Enter HERALD.]

Herald. Servants of God, and watchers of the temple,

I am here to inform you, without circumlocution:

The Archbishop is in England, and is close outside the city.

I was sent before in haste

To give you notice of his coming, as much as was possible,

That you may prepare to meet him.

First Priest. What, is the exile ended, is our Lord Archbishop—

Reunited with the King? what reconciliation

Of two proud men? what peace can be found

To grow between the hammer and the anvil? Tell us,

Are the old disputes at an end, is the wall of pride cast down

That divided them? Is it peace or war? Does he come

In full assurance, or only secure

In the power of Rome, the spiritual rule, The assurance of right, and the love of the people,

Contemning the hatred and envy of barons?

Herald. You are right to express a certain incredulity.

He comes in pride and sorrow, affirming all his claims.

Assured, beyond doubt, of the devotion of the people,

Who receive him with scenes of frenzied enthusiasm.

Lining the road and throwing down their capes,

Strewing the way with leaves and late flowers of the season.

The streets of the city will be packed to suffocation,

And I think that his horse will be deprived of its tail,

A single hair of which becomes a precious relic.

He is at one with the Pope, and with the King of France,

Who indeed would have liked to detain him in his kingdom:

But as for our King, that is another matter.

First Priest. But again, is it war or peace?

Herald. Peace, but not the kiss of peace.

A patched up affair, if you ask my opinion.

And if you ask me, I think the Lord Archbishop

Is not the man to cherish any illusions,

Or yet to diminish the least of his pretensions.

If you ask my opinion, I think that this peace

Is nothing like an end, or like a beginning.

It is common knowledge that when the Archbishop

Parted from the King, he said to the King, My Lord, he said, I leave you as a man

Whom in this life I shall not see again.

I have this, I assure you, on the highest authority;

There are several opinions as to what he meant

But no one considers it a happy prognostic. [Exit.]

First Priest. I fear for the Archbishop, I fear for the Church,

I know that the pride bred of sudden prosperity

Was but confirmed by bitter adversity.

I saw him as Chancellor, flattered by the King,

Liked or feared by courtiers, in their overbearing fashion,

Despised and despising, always isolated,

Never one among them, always insecure;

His pride always feeding upon his own virtues,

Pride drawing sustenance from impartiality,

Pride drawing sustenance from generosity,

Loathing power given by temporal devolution,

Wishing subjection to God alone.

Had the King been greater, or had he been weaker

Things had perhaps been different for Thomas.

Second Priest. Yet our lord is returned. Our lord has come back to his own again.

We have had enough of waiting, from December to dismal December.

The Archbishop shall be at our head, dispelling dismay and doubt.

He will tell us what we are to do, he will give us our orders, instruct us.

Our Lord is at one with the Pope, and also the King of France.

We can lean on a rock, we can feel a firm foothold

Against the perpetual wash of tides of balance of forces of barons and landholders.

The rock of God is beneath our feet. Let us meet the Archbishop with cordial thanksgiving:

Our lord, our Archbishop returns. And when the Archbishop returns

Our doubts are dispelled. Let us therefore rejoice,

I say rejoice, and show a glad face for his welcome.

I am the Archbishop's man. Let us give the Archbishop welcome!

Third Priest. For good or ill, let the wheel turn.

The wheel has been still, these seven years, and no good.

For ill or good, let the wheel turn.

For who knows the end of good or evil?

Until the grinders cease

And the door shall be shut in the street,

And all the daughters of music shall be brought low.

Chorus. Here is no continuing city, here is no abiding stay.

Ill the wind, ill the time, uncertain the profit, certain the danger.

O late late late, late is the time, late too late, and rotten the year;

Evil the wind, and bitter the sea, and grey the sky, grey grey grey.

O Thomas, return, Archbishop; return, return to France.

Return. Quickly. Quietly. Leave us to perish in quiet.

You come with applause, you come with rejoicing, but you come bringing death into Canterbury:

A doom on the house, a doom on yourself, a doom on the world.

We do not wish anything to happen.

Seven years we have lived quietly,

Succeeded in avoiding notice,

Living and partly living.

There have been oppression and luxury,

There have been poverty and licence,

There has been minor injustice.

Yet we have gone on living,

Living and partly living.

Sometimes the corn has failed us,

Sometimes the harvest is good,

One year is a year of rain,

Another a year of dryness,

One year the apples are abundant,

Another year the plums are lacking.

Yet we have gone on living,

Living and partly living.

We have kept the feasts, heard the masses,

We have brewed beer and cider,

Gathered wood against the winter,

Talked at the corner of the fire,

Talked at the corners of streets,

Talked not always in whispers,

Living and partly living.

We have seen births, deaths and marriages,

We have had various scandals,

We have been afflicted with taxes,

We have had laughter and gossip,

Several girls have disappeared

Unaccountably, and some not able to.

We have all had our private terrors,

Our particular shadows, our secret fears.

But now a great fear is upon us, a fear not of one but of many.

A fear like birth and death, when we see birth and death alone

In a void apart. We

Are afraid in a fear which we cannot know, which we cannot face, which none understands,

And our hearts are torn from us, our brains unskinned like the layers of an onion, our selves are lost lost

In a final fear which none understands. O
Thomas Archbishop,

O Thomas our Lord, leave us and leave
us be, in our humble and tarnished
frame of existence, leave us; do not
ask us

To stand to the doom on the house, the
doom on the Archbishop, the doom
on the world.

Archbishop, secure and assured of your
fate, unafraid among the shades, do
you realise what you ask, do you
realise what it means

To the small folk drawn into the pattern
of fate, the small folk who live among
small things,

The strain on the brain of the small folk
who stand to the doom of the house,
the doom of their lord, the doom of
the world?

O Thomas, Archbishop, leave us, leave us,
leave sullen Dover, and set sail for
France. Thomas our Archbishop still
our Archbishop even in France.
Thomas Archbishop, set the white sail
between the grey sky and the bitter
sea, leave us, leave us for France.

Second Priest. What a way to talk at such
a juncture!

You are foolish, immodest and babbling
women.

Do you not know that the good Archbishop
Is likely to arrive at any moment?

The crowds in the streets will be cheering
and cheering,

You go on croaking like frogs in the tree-
tops:

But frogs at least can be cooked and
eaten.

Whatever you are afraid of, in your
craven apprehension,

Let me ask you at the least to put on
pleasant faces,

And give a hearty welcome to our good
Archbishop.

[Enter THOMAS.]

Thomas. Peace. And let them be, in their
exaltation.

They speak better than they know, and be-
yond your understanding.

They know and do not know, what it is to
act or suffer.

They know and do not know, that acting
is suffering

And suffering is action. Neither does the
actor suffer

Nor the patient act. But both are fixed
In an eternal action, an eternal patience
To which all must consent that it may
be willed

And which all must suffer that they may
will it,

(That the pattern may subsist, for the pat-
tern is the action

And the suffering, that the wheel may turn
and still—

Be forever still.

Second Priest. O my Lord, forgive me, I did
not see you coming,

Engrossed by the chatter of these foolish
women.

Forgive us, my Lord, you would have had
a better welcome

If we had been sooner prepared for the
event.

But your Lordship knows that seven years
of waiting,

Seven years of prayer, seven years of
emptiness,

Have better prepared our hearts for your
coming,

Than seven days could make ready Can-
terbury.

However, I will have fires laid in all your
rooms

To take the chill off our English De-
cember,

Your Lordship now being used to a better
climate.

Your Lordship will find your rooms in
order as you left them.

Thomas. And will try to leave them in
order as I find them.

I am more than grateful for all your kind
attentions.

These are small matters. Little rest in
Canterbury

With eager enemies restless about us.

Rebellious bishops, York, London, Salis-
bury,

Would have intercepted our letters,
Filled the coast with spies and sent to
meet me

Some who hold me in bitterest hate.
By God's grace aware of their prevision

I sent my letters on another day,
Had fair crossing, found at Sandwich

Broc, Warene, and the Sheriff of Kent,
Those who had sworn to have my head

from me.

Only John, the Dean of Salisbury,
Fearing for the King's name, warning

against treason,

Made them hold their hands. So for the
time

We are unmolested.

First Priest. But do they follow after?

Thomas. For a little time the hungry hawk
Will only soar and hover, circling lower,
Waiting excuse, pretence, opportunity.

End will be simple, sudden, God-given.
Meanwhile the substance of our first act
Will be shadows, and the strife with
shadows.

Heavier the interval than the consumma-
tion.

All things prepare the event. Watch.

[Enter FIRST TEMPTER.]

First Tempter. You see, my Lord, I do not
wait upon ceremony:

Here I have come, forgetting all acrimony,
Hoping that your present gravity
Will find excuse for my humble levity
Remembering all the good time past.

Your Lordship won't despise an old friend
out of favour?

Old Tom, gay Tom, Becket of London,
Your Lordship won't forget that evening
on the river

When the King, and you and I were all
friends together?

Friendship should be more than biting
Time can sever.

What, my Lord, now that you recover
Favour with the King, shall we say that
summer's over

Or that the good time cannot last?
Fluting in the meadows, viols in the hall,
Laughter and apple-blossom floating on
the water,

Singing at nightfall, whispering in cham-
bers,

Fires devouring the winter season,
Eating up the darkness, with wit and wine
and wisdom!

Now that the King and you are in amity,
Clergy and laity may return to gaiety,
Mirth and sportfulness need not walk
warily.

Thomas. You talk of seasons that are past.
I remember

Not worth forgetting.

Tempter. And of the new season.
Spring has come in winter. Snow in the
branches

Shall float as sweet as blossoms. Ice along
the ditches

Mirror the sunlight. Love in the orchard
Send the sap shooting. Mirth matches
melancholy.

Thomas. We do not know very much of the
future

Except that from generation to genera-
tion

The same things happen again and again.
Men learn little from others' experience.

But in the life of one man, never

The same time returns. Sever

The cord, shed the scale. Only

The fool, fixed in his folly, may think

Can make his own destiny
He can turn the wheel on which he turns.
Tempter. My Lord, a nod is as good as a
wink.

A man will often love what he spurns.
For the good times past, that are come
again

I am your man.

Thomas. Not in this train.
Look to your behaviour. You were safer
Think of penitence and follow your mas-
ter.

Tempter. Not at this gait!
If you go so fast, others may go faster.

Your Lordship is too proud!

The safest beast is not the one that roars
most loud.

This was not the way of the King our
master!

You were not used to be so hard upon
sinners

When they were your friends. Be easy,
man!

The easy man lives to eat the best din-
ners.

Take a friend's advice. Leave well alone,
Or your goose may be cooked and eaten
to the bone.

Thomas. You come twenty years too late.

Tempter. Then I leave you to your fate.
I leave you to the pleasures of your higher
vices.

Which will have to be paid for at higher
prices.

Farewell, my Lord, I do not wait upon
ceremony,

I leave as I came, forgetting all acrimony,
Hoping that your present gravity
Will find excuse for my humble levity.

If you will remember me, my Lord, at
your prayers,

I'll remember you at kissing-time below
the stairs.

Thomas. Leave-well-alone, the springtime
fancy,

So one thought goes whistling down the
wind.

The impossible is still temptation.

The impossible, the undesirable,
Voices under sleep, waking a dead world,
So that the mind may not be whole in the
present.

[Enter SECOND TEMPTER.]

Second Tempter. Your Lordship has forgot-
ten me, perhaps. I will remind you.

We met at Clarendon, at Northampton,
And last at Montmirail, in Maine. Now
that I have recalled them,

Let us but set these not too pleasant
memories

In balance against other, earlier

And weightier ones: those of the Chancellorship.

See how the late ones rise! The master of policy

Whom all acknowledged, should guide the state again.

Thomas. Your meaning?

Tempter. The Chancellorship that you resigned

When you were made Archbishop—that was a mistake

On your part—still may be regained. Think, my Lord,

{ Power obtained grows to glory,

Life lasting, a permanent possession,

A templed tomb, monument of marble.

Rule over men reckon no madness.

Thomas. To the man of God what gladness?

Tempter. Sadness

Only to those giving love to God alone.

Fare forward, shun two files of shadows:

Mirth merrymaking, melting strength in

sweetness,

Fiddling to feebleness, doomed to disdain;

And godlovers' longings, lost in God.

Shall he who held the solid substance

Wander waking with deceitful shadows?

Power is present. Holiness hereafter.

Thomas. Who then?

Tempter. The Chancellor. King and Chancellor.

{ King commands. Chancellor richly rules.

This is a sentence not taught in the schools.

To set down the great, protect the poor,
Beneath the throne of God can man do more?

Disarm the ruffian, strengthen the laws,

Rule for the good of the better cause,

Dispensing justice make all even,

Is thrive on earth, and perhaps in heaven.

Thomas. What means?

Tempter. Real power
Is purchased at price of a certain submission.

Your spiritual power is earthly perdition.

Power is present, for him who will wield.

Thomas. Whose was it?

Tempter. His who is gone.

Thomas. Who shall have it?

Tempter. He who will come.

Thomas. What shall be the month?

Tempter. The last from the first.

Thomas. What shall we give for it?

Tempter. Pretence of priestly power.

Thomas. Why should we give it?

Tempter. For the power and the glory.

Thomas. No!

Tempter. Yes!—Or bravery will be broken,

Cabined in Canterbury, realmless ruler,
Self-bound servant of a powerless Pope,
The old stag, circled with hounds.

Thomas. No!

Tempter. Yes! men must manoeuvre. Monarchs also,

Waging war abroad, need fast friends at home.

Private policy is public profit;

Dignity still shall be dressed with decorum.

Thomas. You forget the bishops
Whom I have laid under excommunication.

Tempter. Hungry hatred
Will not strive against intelligent self-interest.

Thomas. You forget the barons. Who will not forget

Constant curbing of pretty privilege.

Tempter. Against the barons
Is King's cause, churl's cause, Chancellor's cause.

Thomas. No! shall I, who keep the keys
Of heaven and hell, supreme alone in England,

Who bind and loose, with power from the Pope,

Descend to desire a punier power?

Delegate to deal the doom of damnation,
To condemn kings, not serve among their servants,

Is my open office. No! Go.

Tempter. Then I leave you to your fate.
Your sin soars sunward, covering kings' falcons.

Thomas. Temporal power, to build a good world,

To keep order, as the world knows order.

(Those who put their faith in worldly order

Not controlled by the order of God,

In confident ignorance, but arrest disorder,

Make it fast, breed fatal disease,

Degrade what they exalt. Power with the King—

I was the King, his arm, his better reason.
But what was once exaltation

Would now be only mean descent.

[Enter THIRD TEMPTER.]

Third Tempter. I am an unexpected visitor.

Thomas. I expected you.

Tempter. But not in this guise, or for my present purpose.

Thomas. No purpose brings surprise.

Tempter. Well, my Lord,

I am no trifier, and no politician.

To idle or intrigue at court

I have no skill. I am no courtier.

I know a horse, a dog, a wench;

I know how to hold my estates in order,

A country-keeping lord who minds his own business.

It is we country lords who know the country

And we who know what the country needs.
It is our country. We care for the country.

We are the backbone of the nation.

We, not the plotting parasites

About the King. Excuse my bluntness:

I am a rough straightforward Englishman.

Thomas. Proceed straight forward.

Tempter. Purpose is plain.

Endurance of friendship does not depend

Upon ourselves, but upon circumstance.

But circumstance is not undetermined.

Unreal friendship may turn to real;

But real friendship, once ended, cannot be mended.

Sooner shall enmity turn to alliance.

The enmity that never knew friendship

Can sooner know accord.

Thomas. For a countryman

You wrap your meaning in as dark generality

As any courtier.

Tempter. This is the simple fact!

You have no hope of reconciliation

With Henry the King. You look only

To blind assertion in isolation.

That is a mistake.

Thomas. O Henry, O my King!

Tempter. Other friends

May be found in the present situation.

King in England is not all-powerful;

King is in France, squabbling in Anjou;

Round him waiting hungry sons.

We are for England. We are in England.

You and I, my Lord, are Normans.

England is a land for Norman

Sovereignty. Let the Angevin

Destroy himself, fighting in Anjou.

He does not understand us, the English barons.

We are the people.

Thomas. To what does this lead?

Tempter. To a happy coalition
Of intelligent interests.

Thomas. But what have you—
If you do speak for barons—

Tempter. For a powerful party
Which has turned its eyes in your direction—

To gain from you, your Lordship asks.

For us, Church favour would be an advantage,

Blessing of Pope powerful protection

In the fight for liberty. You, my Lord,

In being with us, would fight a good stroke

At once, for England and for Rome,

Ending the tyrannous jurisdiction
Of king's court over bishop's court,
Of king's court over baron's court.

Thomas. Which I helped to found.

Tempter.

Which you helped to found.

But time past is time forgotten.

We expect the rise of a new constellation.

Thomas. And if the Archbishop cannot trust the King,

How can he trust those who work for King's undoing?

Tempter. Kings will allow no power but their own;

Church and people have good cause against the throne.

Thomas. If the Archbishop cannot trust the Throne,

He has good cause to trust none but God alone.

It is not better to be thrown

To a thousand hungry appetites than to one.

At a future time this may be shown.

I ruled once as Chancellor

And men like you were glad to wait at my door.

Not only in the court, but in the field

And in the tilt-yard I made many yield.

Shall I who ruled like an eagle over doves

Now take the shape of a wolf among wolves?

Pursue your treacheries as you have done before:

No one shall say that I betrayed a king.

Tempter. Then, my Lord, I shall not wait at your door;

And I well hope, before another spring

The King will show his regard for your loyalty.

Thomas. To make, then break, this thought has come before,

The desperate exercise of failing power.

Samson in Gaza did no more.

But if I break, I must break myself alone.

[Enter FOURTH TEMPTER.]

Fourth Tempter. Well done, Thomas, your will is hard to bend.

And with me beside you, you shall not lack a friend.

Thomas. Who are you? I expected

Three visitors, not four.

Tempter. Do not be surprised to receive one more.

Had I been expected, I had been here before.

I always precede expectation.

Thomas. Who are you?

Tempter. As you do not know me, I do not need a name,

And, as you know me, that is why I come.

You know me, but have never seen my face.

To meet before was never time or place.

Thomas. Say what you come to say.

Tempter. It shall be said at last.

Hooks have been baited with morsels of the past.

Wantonness is weakness. As for the King,

His hardened hatred shall have no end.

You know truly, the King will never trust

Twice, the man who has been his friend.

Borrow use cautiously, employ

Your services as long as you have to lend.

You would wait for trap to snap

Having served your turn, broken and crushed.

As for barons, envy of lesser men

Is still more stubborn than king's anger.

Kings have public policy, barons private profit,

Jealousy raging possession of the fiend.

Barons are employable against each other;

Greater enemies must kings destroy.

Thomas. What is your counsel?

Tempter. Fare forward to the end.

All other ways are closed to you

Except the way already chosen.

But what is pleasure, kingly rule,

Or rule of men beneath a king,

With craft in corners, stealthy stratagem,

To general grasp of spiritual power?

Man oppressed by sin, since Adam fell—

You hold the keys of heaven and hell.

Power to bind and loose: bind, Thomas, bind,

King and bishop under your heel.

King, emperor, bishop, baron, king:

Uncertain mastery of melting armies,

War, plague, and revolution,

New conspiracies, broken pacts;

To be master or servant within an hour,

This is the course of temporal power.

The Old King shall know it, when at last breath,

No sons, no empire, he bites broken teeth.

You hold the skein: wind, Thomas, wind

The thread of eternal life and death.

You hold this power, hold it.

Thomas. Supreme, in this land?

Tempter. Supreme, but for one.

Thomas. That I do not understand.

Tempter. It is not for me to tell you how this may be so;

I am only here, Thomas, to tell you what you know.

Thomas. How long shall this be?

Tempter. Save what you know already, ask nothing of me.

But think, Thomas, think of glory after death.

When king is dead, there's another king,
And one more king is another reign.

King is forgotten, when another shall come:

Saint and Martyr rule from the tomb.

Think, Thomas, think of enemies dismayed,

Creeping in penance, frightened of a shade;

Think of pilgrims, standing in line

Before the glittering jewelled shrine,

From generation to generation

Bending the knee in supplication.

Think of the miracles, by God's grace,

And think of your enemies, in another place.

Thomas. I have thought of these things.

Tempter. That is why I tell you.

Your thoughts have more power than kings to compel you.

You have also thought, sometimes at your prayers,

Sometimes hesitating at the angles of of stairs,

And between sleep and waking, early in the morning,

When the bird cries, have thought of further scorning.

That nothing lasts, but the wheel turns,

The nest is rifled, and the bird mourns;

That the shrine shall be pillaged, and the gold spent,

The jewels gone for light ladies' ornament,

The sanctuary broken, and its stores

Swept into the laps of parasites and whores.

When miracles cease, and the faithful desert you,

And men shall only do their best to forget you.

And later is worse, when men will not hate you

Enough to defame or to execrate you,

But pondering the qualities that you lacked

Will only try to find the historical fact.

When men shall declare that there was no mystery

About this man who played a certain part in history.

Thomas. But what is there to do? What is left to be done?

Is there no enduring crown to be won?

Tempter. Yes, Thomas, yes; you have thought of that too.

What can compare with glory of Saints Dwelling forever in presence of God?

What earthly glory, of king or emperor,

What earthly pride, that is not poverty

Compared with richness of heavenly grandeur?

Seek the way of martyrdom, make yourself
the lowest
On earth, to be high in heaven.
And see far off below you, where the gulf
is fixed,
Your persecutors, in timeless torment,
Parched passion, beyond expiation.

Thomas. No!
Who are you, tempting with my own desires?

Others have come, temporal tempters,
With pleasure and power at palpable price.
What do you offer? What do you ask?

Tempter. I offer what you desire. I ask
What you have to give. Is it too much
For such a vision of eternal grandeur?

Thomas. Others offered real goods, worth-
less
But real. You only offer
Dreams to damnation.

Tempter. You have often dreamt them.

Thomas. Is there no way, in my soul's sick-
ness,
Does not lead to damnation in pride?
I well know that these temptations
Mean present vanity and future torment.
Can sinful pride be driven out
Only by more sinful? Can I neither act
nor suffer
Without perdition?

Tempter. You know and do not know, what
it is to act or suffer.

You know and do not know, that acting
is suffering,
And suffering action. Neither does the
actor suffer
Nor the patient act. But both are fixed
In an eternal action, an eternal patience
To which all must consent that it may be
willed
And which all must suffer that they may
will it,
That the pattern may subsist, that the
wheel may turn and still
Be forever still.

Chorus. There is no rest in the house. There
is no rest in the street.
I hear restless movement of feet. And the
air is heavy and thick.
Thick and heavy the sky. And the earth
presses up beneath my feet.
What is the sickly smell, the vapour? the
dark green light from a cloud on a
withered tree? The earth is heaving
to parturition of issue of hell. What
is the sticky dew that forms on the
back of my hand?

The Four Tempters. Man's life is a cheat
and a disappointment;
All things are unreal,

Unreal or disappointing:
The Catherine wheel, the pantomime cat,
The prizes given at the children's party,
The prize awarded for the English Essay,
The scholar's degree, the statesman's
decoration.
All things become less real, man passes
From unreality to unreality.
This man is obstinate, blind, intent
On self-destruction,
Passing from deception to deception,
From grandeur to grandeur to final illusion,
Lost in the wonder of his own greatness,
The enemy of society, enemy of himself.

The Three Priests. O Thomas my Lord, do
not fight the intractable tide,
Do not sail the irresistible wind; in the
storm,
Should we not wait for the sea to subside,
in the night
Abide the coming of day, when the travel-
ler may find his way,
The sailor lay course by the sun?

Chorus. Is it the owl that calls, or a signal
between the trees?

Priests. Is the window-bar made fast, is the
door under lock and bolt?

Tempters. Is it rain that taps at the window,
is it wind that pokes at the door?

Chorus. Does the torch flame in the hall, the
candle in the room?

Priests. Does the watchman walk by the
wall?

Tempters. Does the mastiff prowl by the
gate?

Chorus. Death has a hundred hands and
walks by a thousand ways.

Priests. He may come in the sight of all,
he may pass unseen unheard.

Tempters. Come whispering through the ear,
or a sudden shock on the skull.

Chorus. A man may walk with a lamp at
night, and yet be drowned in a ditch.

Priests. A man may climb the stair in the
day, and slip on a broken step.

Tempters. A man may sit at meat, and feel
the cold in his groin.

Chorus. We have not been happy, my Lord,
we have not been too happy.
We are not ignorant women, we know
what we must expect and not expect.
We know of oppression and torture,
We know of extortion and violence,
Destitution, disease,
The old without fire in winter,
The child without milk in summer,
Our labour taken away from us,
Our sins made heavier upon us.
We have seen the young man mutilated,
The torn girl trembling by the mill-stream.

And meanwhile we have gone on living,
 Living and partly living,
 Picking together the pieces,
 Gathering faggots at nightfall,
 Building a partial shelter,
 For sleeping, and eating and drinking and
 laughter.

God gave us always some reason, some
 hope; but now a new terror has soiled
 us, which none can avert, none can
 avoid, flowing under our feet and
 over the sky;

Under doors and down chimneys, flowing
 in at the ear and the mouth and the
 eye.

God is leaving us, God is leaving us, more
 pang, more pain, than birth or death.

Sweet and cloying through the dark air
 Falls the stifling scent of despair;

The forms take shape in the dark air:

Puss-purr of leopard, footfall of padding
 bear,

Palm-pat of nodding ape, square hyaena
 waiting

For laughter, laughter, laughter. The
 Lords of Hell are here.

They curl round you, lie at your feet, swing
 and wing through the dark air.

O Thomas Archbishop, save us, save us,
 save yourself that we may be saved;
 Destroy yourself and we are destroyed.

Thomas. Now is my way clear, now is the
 meaning plain:

Temptation shall not come in this kind
 again.

The last temptation is the greatest treason:
 To do the right deed for the wrong reason.

The natural vigour in the venial sin

Is the way in which our lives begin.

Thirty years ago, I searched all the ways
 That lead to pleasure, advancement and
 praise,

Delight in sense, in learning and in thought,
 Music and philosophy, curiosity,
 The purple bullfinch in the lilac tree,
 The tiltyard skill, the strategy of chess,

Love in the garden, singing to the instru-
 ment,

Were all things equally desirable.

Ambition comes when early force is spent
 And when we find no longer all things
 possible.

Ambition comes behind and unobservable.
 Sin grows with doing good. When I im-
 posed the King's law

In England, and waged war with him
 against Toulouse,

I beat the barons at their own game. I
 Could then despise the men who thought
 me most contemptible,

The raw nobility, whose manners matched
 their fingernails.

While I ate out of the King's dish

To become servant of God was never my
 wish.

Servant of God has chance of greater sin
 And sorrow, than the man who serves a
 king.

For those who serve the greater cause may
 make the cause serve them,

Still doing right: and striving with polit-
 ical men

May make that cause political, not by
 what they do

But by what they are. I know

What yet remains to show you of my his-
 tory

Will seem to most of you at best futility,
 Senseless self-slaughter of a lunatic,

Arrogant passion of a fanatic.

I know that history at all times draws
 The strangest consequence from remotest
 cause.

But for every evil, every sacrilege,
 Crime, wrong, oppression and the axe's
 edge,

Indifference, exploitation, you, and you,
 And you, must all be punished. So must
 you.

I shall no longer act or suffer, to the
 sword's end.

Now my good Angel, whom God appoints
 To be my guardian, hover over the swords'
 points.

INTERLUDE

THE ARCHBISHOP

preaches in the Cathedral on Christmas Morning, 1170.

'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.' *The fourteenth verse of the second chapter of the Gospel according to Saint Luke.* In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Dear children of God, my sermon this morning will be a very short one. I wish only that you should ponder and meditate the deep meaning and mystery of our masses of Christmas Day. For whenever Mass is said, we re-enact the Passion and Death of Our Lord; and on this Christmas Day we do this in celebration of His Birth. So that at the same moment we rejoice in His coming for the salvation of men, and offer again to God His Body and Blood in sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. It was in this same night that has just passed, that a multitude of the heavenly host appeared before the shepherds at Bethlehem, saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men'; at this same time of all the year that we celebrate at once the Birth of Our Lord and His Passion and Death upon the Cross. Beloved, as the World sees, this is to behave in a strange fashion. For who in the World will both mourn and rejoice at once and for the same reason? For either joy will be overborne by mourning, or mourning will be cast out by joy; so it is only in these our Christian mysteries that we can rejoice and mourn at once for the same reason. But think for a while on the meaning of this word 'peace.' Does it seem strange to you that the angels should have announced Peace, when ceaselessly the world has been stricken with War and the fear of War? Does it seem to you that the angelic voices were mistaken, and that the promise was a disappointment and a cheat?

Reflect now, how Our Lord Himself spoke of Peace. He said to His disciples 'My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.' Did He mean peace as we think of it: the kingdom of England at peace with its neighbours, the barons at peace with the King, the

householder counting over his peaceful gains, the swept hearth, his best wine for a friend at the table, his wife singing to the children? Those men His disciples knew no such things: they went forth to journey afar, to suffer by land and sea, to know torture, imprisonment, disappointment, to suffer death by martyrdom. What then did He mean? If you ask that, remember then that He said also, 'Not as the world gives, give I unto you.' So then, He gave to His disciples peace, but not peace as the world gives.

Consider also one thing of which you have probably never thought. Not only do we at the feast of Christmas celebrate at once Our Lord's Birth and His Death: but on the next day we celebrate the martyrdom of His first martyr, the blessed Stephen. Is it an accident, do you think, that the day of the first martyr follows immediately the day of the Birth of Christ? By no means. Just as we rejoice and mourn at once, in the Birth and in the Passion of Our Lord; so also, in a smaller figure, we both rejoice and mourn in the death of martyrs. We mourn, for the sins of the world that has martyred them; we rejoice, that another soul is numbered among the Saints in Heaven, for the glory of God and for the salvation of men.

Beloved, we do not think of a martyr simply as a good Christian who has been killed because he is a Christian: for that would be solely to mourn. We do not think of him simply as a good Christian who has been elevated to the company of the Saints: for that would be simply to rejoice: and neither our mourning nor our rejoicing is as the world's is. A Christian martyrdom is no accident. Saints are not made by accident. Still less is a Christian martyrdom the effect of a man's will to become a Saint, as a man by willing and contriving may become a ruler of men. Ambition fortifies the will of man to become ruler over other men: it operates with deception, cajolery, and violence, it is the action of impurity upon impurity. Not so in Heaven. A martyr, a saint, is always made by the design of God, for His love of men, to warn them and to lead them, to bring them back to His ways. A martyrdom is never the design of man; for the true martyr is he who has become the instrument of God, who has lost his will in the will of God, not lost it but found it,

for he has found freedom in submission to God. The martyr no longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory of martyrdom. So thus as on earth the Church mourns and rejoices at once, in a fashion that the world cannot understand; so in Heaven the Saints are most high, having made themselves most low, seeing themselves not as we see them, but in the light of the Godhead from which they draw their being.

I have spoken to you today, dear children of God, of the martyrs of the past, asking

you to remember especially our martyr of Canterbury, the blessed Archbishop Elphege; because it is fitting, on Christ's birth day, to remember what is that Peace which He brought; and because, dear children, I do not think I shall ever preach to you again; and because it is possible that in a short time you may have yet another martyr, and that one perhaps not the last. I would have you keep in your hearts these words that I say, and think of them at another time. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

PART II

Characters

THREE PRIESTS.

FOUR KNIGHTS.

ARCHBISHOP THOMAS BECKET.

CHORUS OF WOMEN OF CANTERBURY.

ATTENDANTS.

*The first scene is in the Archbishop's Hall,
the second scene is in the Cathedral, on
December 29th, 1170.*

Chorus. Does the bird sing in the South?
Only the sea-bird cries, driven inland by
the storm.

What sign of the spring of the year?

Only the death of the old: not a stir, not a
shoot, not a breath.

Do the days begin to lengthen?

Longer and darker the day, shorter and
colder the night.

Still and stifling the air: but a wind is
stored up in the East.

The starved crow sits in the field, attentive;
and in the wood

The owl rehearses the hollow note of
death.

What signs of a bitter spring?

The wind stored up in the East.

What, at the time of the birth of Our
Lord, at Christmastide,

Is there not peace upon earth, goodwill
among men?

The peace of this world is always uncertain,
unless men keep the peace of
God.

And war among men defiles this world, but
death in the Lord renews it,

And the world must be cleaned in the
winter, or we shall have only

A sour spring, a parched summer, an empty
harvest.

Between Christmas and Easter what work
shall be done?

The ploughman shall go out in March and
turn the same earth

He has turned before, the bird shall sing
the same song.

When the leaf is out on the tree, when
the elder and may

Burst over the stream, and the air is clear
and high,

And voices trill at windows, and children
tumble in front of the door,

What work shall have been done, what
wrong

Shall the bird's song cover, the green tree
cover, what wrong

Shall the fresh earth cover? We wait, and
the time is short

But waiting is long.

*[Enter the FIRST PRIEST with a banner
of St. Stephen borne before him.]*

First Priest. Since Christmas a day: and
the day of St. Stephen, First Martyr.

A day that was always most dear to the
Archbishop Thomas.

And he kneeled down and cried with a
loud voice:

Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.

*[Enter the SECOND PRIEST, with a banner
of St. John the Apostle borne before
him.]*

Second Priest. Since St. Stephen a day:
and the day of St. John the Apostle.

That which was from the beginning, which
we have heard,

Which we Have seen with our eyes, and
our hands have handled

Of the word of life; that which we have
seen and heard

Declare we unto you.

*[Enter the THIRD PRIEST, with a banner
of the Holy Innocents borne before
him.]*

Third Priest. Since St. John the Apostle a
day; and the day of the Holy In-
nocents.

As the voice of many waters, of thunder,
of harps,

They sung as it were a new song.

The blood of thy saints have they shed
like water,

And there was no man to bury them.
Avenge, O Lord,

The blood of thy saints. In Rama, a voice
heard, weeping.

Out of the mouth of very babes, O God!

*[THE PRIESTS stand together with the
banners behind them.]*

First Priest. Since the Holy Innocents a day: the fourth day from Christmas. As for the people, so also for himself, he offereth for sins.

He lays down his life for the sheep. To-day?

Second Priest. Today, what is today? For the day is half gone.

First Priest. Today, what is today?—but another day, the dusk of the year.

Second Priest. Today, what is today? Another night, and another dawn.

Third Priest. What day is the day that we know that we hope for or fear for?

Every day is the day we should fear from or hope from. One moment

Weighs like another. Only in retrospection, selection,

We say, that was the day. The critical moment

That is always now, and here. Even now, in sordid particulars

The eternal design may appear.

[Enter the FOUR KNIGHTS.]

First Knight. Servants of the King.

First Priest. And known to us. You are welcome. Have you ridden far?

First Knight. Not far today, but matters urgent

Have brought us from France. We rode hard,

Took ship yesterday, landed last night, Having business with the Archbishop.

Second Knight. Urgent business.

Third Knight. From the King.

Fourth Knight. By the King's order.

First Knight. Our men are outside.

First Priest. You know the Archbishop's hospitality.

We are about to go to dinner.

The good Archbishop would be vexed

If we did not offer you entertainment

Before your business. Please dine with us.

Your men shall be looked after also.

Dinner before business. Do you like roast pork?

First Knight. Business before dinner. We will roast your pork

First, and dine upon it after.

Second Knight. We must see the Archbishop.

Third Knight. Go, tell the Archbishop

We have no need of his hospitality.

We will find our own dinner.

First Priest. [To ATTENDANT.] Go, tell His Lordship.

Fourth Knight. How much longer will you keep us waiting?

[Enter THOMAS.]

Thomas. [To PRIESTS.] However certain our expectation

The moment foreseen may be unexpected When it arrives. It comes when we are Engrossed with matters of other urgency. On my table you will find The papers in order, and the documents signed.

[To KNIGHTS.]

You are welcome, whatever your business may be.

You say, from the King?

First Knight. Most surely from the King. We must speak with you alone.

Thomas. [To PRIESTS.] Leave us then alone.

Now what is the matter?

First Knight. This is the matter.

The Four Knights. You are the Archbishop in revolt against the King; in rebellion to the King and the law of the land;

You are the Archbishop who was made by the King; whom he set in your place to carry out his command.

You are his servant, his tool, and his jack,

You wore his favours on your back,

You had your honours all from his hand; from him you had the power, the seal and the ring.

This is the man who was the tradesman's son: the backstairs brat who was born in Cheapside;

This is the creature that crawled upon the King; swollen with blood and swollen with pride.

Creeping out of the London dirt,

Crawling up like a louse on your shirt,

The man who cheated, swindled, lied; broke his oath and betrayed his King.

Thomas. This is not true.

Both before and after I received the ring I have been a loyal vassal to the King.

Saving my order, I am at his command, As his most faithful vassal in the land.

First Knight. Saving your order! let your order save you—

As I do not think it is like to do.

Saving your ambition is what you mean, Saving your pride, envy and spleen.

Second Knight. Saving your insolence and greed.

Won't you ask us to pray to God for you, in your need?

Third Knight. Yes, we'll pray for you!

Fourth Knight. Yes, we'll pray for you!

The Four Knights. Yes, we'll pray that God may help you!

Thomas. But, gentlemen, your business Which you said so urgent, is it only Scolding and blaspheming?

First Knight. That was only

Our indignation, as loyal subjects.

Thomas. Loyal? to whom?

First Knight. To the King!

Second Knight. The King!

Third Knight. The King!

Fourth Knight. God bless him!

Thomas. Then let your new coat of loyalty
be worn

Carefully, so it get not soiled or torn.

Have you something to say?

First Knight. By the King's command.

Shall we say it now?

Second Knight. Without delay,
Before the old fox is off and away.

Thomas. What you have to say
By the King's command—if it be the
King's command—

Should be said in public. If you make
charges,

Then in public I will refute them.

First Knight. No! here and now!

[*They make to attack him, but the
PRIESTS and ATTENDANTS return and
quietly interpose themselves.*]

Thomas. Now and here!

First Knight. Of your earlier misdeeds I
shall make no mention.

They are too well known. But after dis-
sension

Had ended, in France, and you were en-
dued

With your former privilege, how did you
show your gratitude?

You had fled from England, not exiled
Or threatened, mind you; but in the hope
Of stirring up trouble in the French do-
minions.

You sowed strife abroad, you reviled
The King to the King of France, to the
Pope.

Raising up against him false opinions.

Second Knight. Yet the King, out of his
charity,

And urged by your friends, offered clem-
ency,

Made a pact of peace, and all dispute
ended

Sent you back to your See as you de-
manded.

Third Knight. And burying the memory of
your transgressions

Restored your honours and your pos-
sessions.

All was granted for which you sued:

Yet how, I repeat, did you show your
gratitude?

Fourth Knight. Suspending those who had
crowned the young prince,

Denying the legality of his coronation;

Binding with the chains of anathema,
Using every means in your power to
evince

The King's faithful servants, everyone
who transacts

His business in his absence, the business of
the nation.

First Knight. These are the facts.

Say therefore if you will be content

To answer in the King's presence. There-
fore were we sent.

Thomas. Never was it my wish

To uncrown the King's son, or to diminish
His honour and power. Why should he
wish

To deprive my people of me and keep me
from my own

And bid me sit in Canterbury, alone?

I would wish him three crowns rather
than one,

And as for the bishops, it is not my yoke
That is laid upon them, or mine to revoke.

Let them go to the Pope. It was he who
condemned them.

First Knight. Through you they were sus-
pended.

Second Knight. By you be this amended.

Third Knight. Absolve them.

Fourth Knight. Absolve them.

Thomas. I do not deny
That this was done through me. But it is
not I

Who can loose whom the Pope has bound.
Let them go to him, upon whom redounds
Their contempt towards me, their con-
tempt towards the Church shown.

First Knight. Be that as it may, here is the
King's command:

That you and your servants depart from
this land.

Thomas. If that is the King's command, I
will be bold

To say: seven years were my people with-
out

My presence; seven years of misery and
pain.

Seven years a mendicant on foreign charity
I lingered abroad: seven years is no
brevity.

I shall not get those seven years back
again.

Never again, you must make no doubt,
Shall the sea run between the shepherd
and his fold.

First Knight. The King's justice, the King's
majesty,

You insult with gross indignity;

Insolent madman, whom nothing deters
From attainting his servants and ministers.

Thomas. It is not I who insult the King,

And there is higher than I or the King.
It is not I, Becket from Cheapside,
It is not against me, Becket, that you
strive.

It is not Becket who pronounces doom,
But the Law of Christ's Church, the judge-
ment of Rome.

Go then to Rome, or let Rome come
Here, to you, in the person of her most
unworthy son.

Petty politicians in your endless adventure!
Rome alone can absolve those who break
Christ's indenture.

First Knight. Priest, you have spoken in
peril of your life.

Second Knight. Priest, you have spoken in
danger of the knife.

Third Knight. Priest, you have spoken
treachery and treason.

Fourth Knight. Priest! traitor confirmed
in malfeasance.

Thomas. I submit my cause to the judge-
ment of Rome.

But if you kill me, I shall rise from my
tomb

To submit my cause before God's throne.

Knights. Priest! monk! and servant! take,
hold, detain,

Restrain this man, in the King's name;
Or answer with your bodies, if he escape
before we come,

We come for the King's justice, we come
again.

[*Exeunt.*]

Thomas. Pursue those who flee, track down
those who evade;

Come for arrest, come with the sword,
Here, here, you shall find me ready, in the
battle of the Lord.

At whatsoever time you are ready to come,
You will find me still more ready for
martyrdom.

Chorus. I have smelt them, the death-
bringers, senses are quickened

By subtle forebodings; I have heard
Fluting in the nighttime, fluting and owls,
have seen at noon

Scaly wings slanting over, huge and ridic-
ulous. I have tasted

The savour of putrid flesh in the spoon.
I have felt

The heaving of earth at nightfall, restless,
absurd. I have heard

Laughter in the noises of beasts that make
strange noises: jackal, jackass, jack-
daw; the scurrying noise of mouse
and jerboa; the laugh of the loon, the
lunatic bird. I have seen

Grey necks twisting, rat tails twining, in
the thick light of dawn. I have eaten

Smooth creatures still living, with the
strong salt taste of living things under
sea; I have tasted

The living lobster, the crab, the oyster, the
whelk and the prawn; and they live
and spawn in my bowels, and my
bowels dissolve in the light of dawn.
I have smelt

Death in the rose, death in the hollyhock,
sweet pea, hyacinth, primrose and
cowslip. I have seen

Trunk and horn, tusk and hoof, in odd
places;

I have lain on the floor of the sea and
breathed with the breathing of the
sea-anemone, swallowed with ingurgi-
tation of the sponge. I have lain in
the soil and criticised the worm. In
the air

Flirted with the passage of the kite, I
have plunged with the kite and cower-
ed with the wren. I have felt

The horn of the beetle, the scale of the
viper, the mobile hard insensitive skin
of the elephant, the evasive flank of
the fish. I have smelt

Corruption in the dish, incense in the la-
trine, the sewer in the incense, the
smell of sweet soap in the woodpath,
a hellish sweet scent in the woodpath,
while the ground heaved. I have seen
Rings of light coiling downwards, leading
To the horror of the ape. Have I not
known, not known

What was coming to be? It was here, in
the kitchen, in the passage,

In the mews in the barn in the byre in the
market place

In our veins our bowels our skulls as well
As well as in the plottings of potentates
As well as in the consultations of powers.
What is woven on the loom of fate

What is woven in the councils of princes
Is woven also in our veins, our brains,

Is woven like a pattern of living worms
In the guts of the women of Canterbury.

I have smelt them, the death-bringers;
now is too late

For action, too soon for contrition.
Nothing is possible but the shamed swoon
Of those consenting to the last humiliation.
I have consented, Lord Archbishop, have
consented.

Am torn away, subdued, violated,
United to the spiritual flesh of nature,
Mastered by the animal powers of spirit,
Dominated by the lust of self-demolition,
By the final utter uttermost death of spirit,
By the final ecstasy of waste and shame,

O Lord Archbishop, O Thomas Archbishop,
forgive us, forgive us, pray for us that
we may pray for you, out of our
shame.

Thomas. Peace, and be at peace with your
thoughts and visions.

These things had to come to you and you
to accept them.

This is your share of the eternal burden,
The perpetual glory. This is one moment,
But know that another
Shall pierce you with a sudden painful joy
When the figure of God's purpose is made
complete.

You shall forget these things, toiling in
the household,

You shall remember them, droning by the
fire,

When age and forgetfulness sweeten
memory

Only like a dream that has often been
told

And often been changed in the telling.
They will seem unreal.

Human kind cannot bear very much
reality.

Priests. [Severally.] My Lord, you must
not stop here. To the minster.
Through the cloister. No time to
waste. They are coming back, armed.
To the altar, to the altar. They are
here already. To the sanctuary.
They are breaking in. We can bar-
ricade the minster doors. You can-
not stay here. Force him to come.
Seize him.

Thomas. All my life they have been com-
ing, these feet. All my life I have waited.
Death will come only when I am worthy,
And if I am worthy, there is no danger.
I have therefore only to make perfect my
will.

Priests. My Lord, they are coming. They
will break through presently.

You will be killed. Come to the altar.

Thomas. Peace! be quiet! remember where
you are, and what is happening;
No life here is sought for but mine,
And I am not in danger: only near to
death.

Priests. Make haste, my Lord. Don't stop
here talking. It is not right.

What shall become of us, my Lord, if you
are killed; what shall become of us?

Thomas. That again is another theme
To be developed and resolved in the pat-
tern of time.

It is not for me to run from city to city;
To meet death gladly is only
The only way in which I can defend

The Law of God, the holy canons.

Priests. My Lord, to vespers! You must
not be absent from vespers. You
must not be absent from the divine
office. To vespers. Into the cathedral!

Thomas. Go to vespers, remember me at
your prayers.

They shall find the shepherd here; the
flock shall be spared.

I have had a tremor of bliss, a wink of
heaven, a whisper,

And I would no longer be denied; all
things

Proceed to a joyful consummation.

Priests. Seize him! force him! drag him!

Thomas. Keep your hands off!

Priests. To vespers! Take his feet! Up with
him! Hurry.

[They drag him off. While the CHORUS
speak, the scene is changed to the cathe-
dral.]

Chorus. [While a Dies Irae is sung in Latin
by a choir in the distance.]

Numb the hand and dry the eyelid,

Still the horror, but more horror

Than when tearing in the belly.

Still the horror, but more horror

Than when twisting in the fingers,

Than when splitting in the skull.

More than footfall in the passage,

More than shadow in the doorway,

More than fury in the hall.

The agents of hell disappear, the human,
they shrink and dissolve

Into dust on the wind, forgotten, un-
memorable; only is here

The white flat face of Death, God's silent
servant,

And behind the face of Death the Judge-
ment

And behind the Judgement the Void, more
horrid than active shapes of hell;

Emptiness, absence, separation from God;
The horror of the effortless journey, to

the empty land

Which is no land, only emptiness, ab-
sence, the Void.

Where those who were men can no longer
turn the mind

To distraction, delusion, escape into
dream, pretence,

Where the soul is no longer deceived, for
there are no objects, no tones,

No colours, no forms to distract, to divert
the soul

From seeing itself, foully united forever,
nothing with nothing,

Not what we call death, but what beyond
 death is not death,
We fear, we fear. Who shall then plead
 for me,
 Who intercede for me, in my most need?

Dead upon the tree, my Saviour,
Let not be in vain Thy labour;
Help me, Lord, in my last fear.

Dust I am, to dust am bending,
 From the final doom impending
 Help me, Lord, for death is near.

[*In the cathedral.* THOMAS and
 PRIESTS.]

Priests. Bar the door. Bar the door.
 The door is barred.

We are safe. We are safe.
 The enemy may rage outside, he will tire
 In vain. They cannot break in.
 They dare not break in.
 They cannot break in. They have not the
 force.

We are safe. We are safe.

Thomas. Unbar the doors! throw open the
 doors!

I will not have the house of prayer, the
 church of Christ,
 The sanctuary, turned into a fortress.
 The Church shall protect her own, in her
 own way, not
 As oak and stone; stone and oak decay,
 Give no stay, but the Church shall endure.
 The church shall be open, even to our
 enemies. Open the door!

Priests. My Lord! these are not men, these
 come not as men come, but
 Like maddened beasts. They come not
 like men, who

Respect the sanctuary, who kneel to the
 Body of Christ,

But like beasts. You would bar the door
 Against the lion, the leopard, the wolf or
 the boar,

Why not more

Against beasts with the souls of damned
 men, against men

Who would damn themselves to beasts.
 My Lord! My Lord!

Thomas. Unbar the door!

You think me reckless, desperate and mad.
 You argue by results, as this world does,
 To settle if an act be good or bad.

You defer to the fact. For every life and
 every act

Consequence of good and evil can be
 shown.

And as in time results of many deeds are
 blended

So good and evil in the end become con-
founded.

It is not in time that my death shall be
 known;

It is out of time that my decision is taken
 If you call that decision

To which my whole being gives entire con-
 sent.

I give my life

To the Law of God above the Law of Man.

Those who do not the same

How should they know what I do?

How should you know what I do? Yet
 how much more

Should you know than these madmen
 beating on the door.

Unbar the door! unbar the door!

We are not here to triumph by fighting, by
 stratagem, or by resistance,

Not to fight with beasts as men. We have
 fought the beast

And have conquered. We have only to
 conquer

Now, by suffering. This is the easier vic-
 tory.

Now is the triumph of the Cross, now
 Open the door! I command it. OPEN THE
 DOOR!

[*The door is opened. The KNIGHTS en-
 ter, slightly tipsy.*]

Priests. This way, my Lord! Quick. Up the
 stair. To the roof. To the crypt.
 Quick. Come. Force him.

Knights. [*One line each.*] Where is Becket,
 the traitor to the King?

Where is Becket, the meddling priest?

Come down Daniel to the lions' den,

Come down Daniel for the mark of the
 beast.

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Are you marked with the mark of the
 beast?

Come down Daniel to the lions' den,

Come down Daniel and join in the feast.

Where is Becket the Cheapside brat?

Where is Becket the faithless priest?

Come down Daniel to the lions' den,

Come down Daniel and join in the feast.

Thomas. It is the just man who

Like a bold lion, should be without fear.

I am here.

No traitor to the King. I am a priest,

A Christian, saved by the blood of Christ,

Ready to suffer with my blood.

This is the sign of the Church always,

The sign of blood. Blood for blood.

His blood given to buy my life,

My blood given to pay for His death,
My death for His death.

Knights. Absolve all those you have ex-communicated.

Resign the powers you have arrogated.

Restore to the King the money you appropriated.

Renew the obedience you have violated.

Thomas. For my Lord I am now ready to die,

That His Church may have peace and liberty.

Do with me as you will, to your hurt and shame;

But none of my people, in God's name,
Whether layman or clerk, shall you touch.
This I forbid.

Knights. Traitor! traitor! traitor! traitor!

Thomas. You, Reginald, three times traitor you:

Traitor to me as my temporal vassal,

Traitor to me as your spiritual lord,

Traitor to God in desecrating His Church.

First Knight. No faith do I owe to a renegade,

And what I owe shall now be paid.

Thomas. Now to Almighty God, to the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, to the blessed John the Baptist, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, to the blessed martyr Denys, and to all the Saints, I commend my cause and that of the Church.

[While the KNIGHTS kill him, we hear the CHORUS.]

Chorus. Clear the air! clean the sky! wash the wind! take stone from stone and wash them.

The land is foul, the water is foul, our beasts and ourselves defiled with blood.

A rain of blood has blinded my eyes.
Where is England? where is Kent?
where is Canterbury?

O far far far in the past; and I wander in a land of barren boughs: if I break them, they bleed; I wander in a land of dry stones: if I touch them they bleed.

How how can I ever return, to the soft quiet seasons?

Night stay with us, stop sun, hold season, let the day not come, let the spring not come.

Can I look again at the day and its common things, and see them all smeared with blood, through a curtain of falling blood?

We did not wish anything to happen.

We understood the private catastrophe,

The personal loss, the general misery,
Living and partly living;

The terror by night that ends in daily action,

The terror by day that ends in sleep;

But the talk in the market-place, the hand on the broom,

The nighttime heaping of the ashes,

The fuel laid on the fire at daybreak,

These acts marked a limit to our suffering.

Every horror had its definition,

Every sorrow had a kind of end:

In life there is not time to grieve long.

But this, this is out of life, this is out of time,

An instant eternity of evil and wrong.

We are soiled by a filth that we cannot clean, united to supernatural vermin,

It is not we alone, it is not the house, it is not the city that is defiled,

But the world that is wholly foul.

Clear the air! clean the sky! wash the wind! take the stone from the stone, take the skin from the arm, take the muscle from the bone, and wash them. Wash the stone, wash the bone, wash the brain, wash the soul, wash them wash them!

[The KNIGHTS, having completed the murder, advance to the front of the stage and address the audience.]

First Knight. We beg you to give us your attention for a few moments. We know that you may be disposed to judge unfavourably of our action. You are Englishmen, and therefore you believe in fair play: and when you see one man being set upon by four, then your sympathies are all with the under dog. I respect such feelings, I share them. Nevertheless, I appeal to your sense of honour. You are Englishmen, and therefore will not judge anybody without hearing both sides of the case. That is in accordance with our long established principle of Trial by Jury. I am not myself qualified to put our case to you. I am a man of action and not of words. For that reason I shall do no more than introduce the other speakers, who, with their various abilities, and different points of view, will be able to lay before you the merits of this extremely complex problem. I shall call upon our youngest member to speak first. William de Traci.

Second Knight. I am afraid I am not anything like such an experienced speaker as Reginald Fitz Urse would lead you to believe. But there is one thing I should like to say, and I might as well say it at once. It is this: in what we have done, and whatever you may think of it, we have been perfectly

disinterested. [*The other KNIGHTS: 'Hear! hear!'*] We are not getting anything out of this. We have much more to lose than to gain. We are four plain Englishmen who put our country first. I dare say that we didn't make a very good impression when we came in. The fact is that we knew we had taken on a pretty stiff job; I'll only speak for myself, but I had drunk a good deal—I am not a drinking man ordinarily—to brace myself up for it. When you come to the point, it does go against the grain to kill an Archbishop, especially when you have been brought up in good Church traditions. So if we seemed a bit rowdy, you will understand why it was; and for my part I am awfully sorry about it. We realised that this was our duty, but all the same we had to work ourselves up to it. And, as I said, we are not getting a penny out of this. We know perfectly well how things will turn out. King Henry—God bless him—will have to say, for reasons of state, that he never meant this to happen; and there is going to be an awful row; and at the best we shall have to spend the rest of our lives abroad. And even when reasonable people come to see that the Archbishop *had* to be put out of the way—and personally I had a tremendous admiration for him—you must have noticed what a good show he put up at the end—they won't give us any glory. No, we have done for ourselves, there's no mistake about that. So, as I said at the beginning, please give us at least the credit for being completely disinterested in this business. I think that is about all I have to say.

First Knight. I think we will all agree that William de Traci has spoken well and has made a very important point. The gist of his argument is this: that we have been completely disinterested. But our act itself needs more justification than that; and you must hear our other speakers. I shall next call upon Hugh de Morville.

Third Knight. I should like first to recur to a point that was very well put by our leader, Reginald Fitz Urse: that you are Englishmen, and therefore your sympathies are always with the under dog. It is the English spirit of fair play. Now the worthy Archbishop, whose good qualities I very much admired, has throughout been presented as the under dog. But is this really the case? I am going to appeal not to your emotions but to your reason. You are hard-headed sensible people, as I can see, and not to be taken in by emotional clap-trap. I therefore ask you to consider soberly: what were the Archbishop's aims? and what are

King Henry's aims? In the answer to these questions lies the key to the problem.

The King's aim has been perfectly consistent. During the reign of the late Queen Matilda and the irruption of the unhappy usurper Stephen, the kingdom was very much divided. Our King saw that the one thing needful was to restore order: to curb the excessive powers of local government, which were usually exercised for selfish and often for seditious ends, and to systematise the judiciary. There was utter chaos: there were three kinds of justice and three kinds of court: that of the King, that of the Bishops, and that of the baronage. I must repeat one point that the last speaker has made. While the late Archbishop was Chancellor, he wholeheartedly supported the King's designs: this is an important point, which if necessary, I can substantiate. Now the King intended that Becket, who had proved himself an extremely able administrator—no one denies that—should unite the offices of Chancellor and Archbishop. No one would have grudged him that; no one than he was better qualified to fill at once these two most important posts. Had Becket concurred with the King's wishes, we should have had an almost ideal State: a union of spiritual and temporal administration, under the central government. I knew Becket well, in various official relations; and I may say that I have never known a man so well qualified for the highest rank of the Civil Service. And what happened? The moment that Becket, at the King's instance, had been made Archbishop, he resigned the office of Chancellor, he became more priestly than the priests, he ostentatiously and offensively adopted an ascetic manner of life, he openly abandoned every policy that he had heretofore supported; he affirmed immediately that there was a higher order than that which our King, and he as the King's servant, had for so many years striven to establish; and that—God knows why—the two orders were incompatible.

You will agree with me that such interference by an Archbishop offends the instincts of a people like ours. So far, I know that I have your approval: I read it in your faces. It is only with the measures we have had to adopt, in order to set matters to rights, that you take issue. No one regrets the necessity for violence more than we do. Unhappily, there are times when violence is the only way in which social justice can be secured. At another time, you would condemn an Archbishop by vote of Parliament and execute him formally as a traitor, and

no one would have to bear the burden of being called murderer. And at a later time still, even such temperate measures as these would become unnecessary. But, if you have now arrived at a just subordination of the pretensions of the Church to the welfare of the State, remember that it is we who took the first step. We have been instrumental in bringing about the state of affairs that you approve. We have served your interests; we merit your applause; and if there is any guilt whatever in the matter, you must share it with us.

First Knight. Morville has given us a great deal to think about. It seems to me that he has said almost the last word, for those who have been able to follow his very subtle reasoning. We have, however, one more speaker, who has I think another point of view to express. If there are any who are still unconvinced, I think that Richard Brito will be able to convince them. Richard Brito.

Fourth Knight. The speakers who have preceded me, to say nothing of our leader, Reginald Fitz Urse, have all spoken very much to the point. I have nothing to add along their particular lines of argument. What I have to say may be put in the form of a question: Who killed the Archbishop? As you have been eye-witnesses of this lamentable scene, you may feel some surprise at my putting it in this way. But consider the course of events. I am obliged, very briefly, to go over the ground traversed by the last speaker. While the late Archbishop was Chancellor, no one, under the King, did more to weld the country together, to give it the unity, the stability, order, tranquillity, and justice that it so badly needed. From the moment he became Archbishop, he completely reversed his policy; he showed himself to be utterly indifferent to the fate of the country, to be, in fact, a monster of egotism, a menace to society. This egotism grew upon him, until it became at last an undoubted mania. Every means that had been tried to conciliate him, to restore him to reason, had failed. Now I have unimpeachable evidence to the effect that before he left France he clearly prophesied, in the presence of numerous witnesses, that he had not long to live, and that he would be killed in England. He used every means of provocation; from his conduct, step by step, there can be no inference except that he had determined upon a death by martyrdom. This man, formerly a great public servant, had become a wrecker. Even at the last, he could have given us reason: you have seen how he

evaded our questions. And when he had deliberately exasperated us beyond human endurance, he could still have easily escaped; he could have kept himself from us long enough to allow our righteous anger to cool. That was just what he did not wish to happen; he insisted, while we were still inflamed with wrath, that the doors should be opened. Need I say more? I think, with these facts before you, you will unhesitatingly render a verdict of Suicide while of Unsound Mind. It is the only charitable verdict you can give, upon one who was, after all, a great man.

First Knight. Thank you, Brito. I think that there is no more to be said; and I suggest that you now disperse quietly to your homes. Please be careful not to loiter in groups at street corners, and do nothing that might provoke any public outbreak.

[*Exeunt KNIGHTS.*]

First Priest. O father, father, gone from us, lost to us,

How shall we find you, from what far place

Do you look down on us? You now in Heaven,

Who shall now guide us, protect us, direct us?

After what journey through what further dread

Shall we recover your presence? when inheritor

Your strength? The Church lies bereft, Alone, desecrated, desolated, and the

heathen shall build on the ruins Their world without God. I see it. I see it.

Third Priest. No. For the Church is stronger for this action,

Triumphant in adversity. It is fortified By persecution: supreme, so long as men will die for it.

Go, weak sad men, lost erring souls, homeless in earth or heaven.

Go where the sunset reddens the last grey rock

Of Brittany, or the Gates of Hercules.

Go venture shipwreck on the sullen coasts

Where blackamoors make captive Christian men;

Go to the northern seas confined with ice Where the dead breath makes numb the

hand, makes dull the brain;

Find an oasis in the desert sun,

Go seek alliance with the heathen Saracen,

To share his filthy rites, and try to snatch

Forgetfulness in his libidinous courts,

Oblivion in the fountain by the date-tree;

Or sit and bite your nails in Aquitaine.

In the small circle of pain within the skull
 You still shall tramp and tread one end-
 less round

(Of thought, to justify your action to your-
 selves,

Weaving a fiction which unravels as you
 weave,

Pacing forever in the hell of make-believe
 Which never is belief: this is your fate on
 earth

And we must think no further of you.
 O my lord,

The glory of whose new state is hidden
 from us,

Pray for us of your charity; now in the
 sight of God

Conjoined with all the saints and martyrs
 gone before you,

Remember us. Let our thanks ascend

To God, who has given us another Saint
 in Canterbury.

*Chorus. [While a Te Deum is sung in Latin
 by a choir in the distance.]*

We praise Thee, O God, for Thy glory
 displayed in all the creatures of the
 earth,

In the snow, in the rain, in the wind, in
 the storm; in all of Thy creatures,
 both the hunters and the hunted.

For all things exist only as seen by Thee,
 only as known by Thee, all things
 exist

Only in Thy light, and Thy glory is de-
 clared even in that which denies
 Thee; the darkness declares the glory
 of light.

Those who deny Thee could not deny, if
 Thou didst not exist; and their denial
 is never complete, for if it were so,
 they would not exist.

They affirm Thee in living; all things af-
 firm Thee in living; the bird in the
 air, both the hawk and the finch; the
 beast on the earth, both the wolf and
 the lamb; the worm in the soil and
 the worm in the belly.

Therefore man, whom Thou hast made to
 be conscious of Thee, must con-
 sciously praise Thee, in thought and
 in word and in deed.

Even with the hand to the broom, the
 back bent in laying the fire, the knee
 bent in cleaning the hearth, we, the
 scrubbers and sweepers of Canter-
 bury,

The back bent under toil, the knee bent
 under sin, the hands to the face under
 fear, the head bent under grief,

Even in us the voices of seasons, the
 snuffle of winter, the song of spring,
 the drone of summer, the voices of
 beasts and of birds, praise Thee.

We thank Thee for Thy mercies of blood,
 for Thy redemption by blood. For
 the blood of Thy martyrs and saints

Shall enrich the earth, shall create the holy
 places.

For wherever a saint has dwelt, wherever
 a martyr has given his blood for the
 blood of Christ,

There is holy ground, and the sanctity shall
 not depart from it

Though armies trample over it, though
 sightseers come with guide-books
 looking over it;

From where the western seas gnaw at the
 coast of Iona,

To the death in the desert, the prayer in
 forgotten places by the broken im-
 perial column,

From such ground springs that which for-
 ever renews the earth

Though it is forever denied. Therefore, O
 God, we thank Thee

Who hast given such blessing to Canter-
 bury.

Forgive us, O Lord, we acknowledge our-
 selves as type of the common man,
 Of the men and women who shut the door
 and sit by the fire;

Who fear the blessing of God, the loneli-
 ness of the night of God, the sur-
 render required, the deprivation in-
 flicted;

Who fear the injustice of men less than
 the justice of God;

Who fear the hand at the window, the fire
 in the thatch, the fist in the tavern,
 the push into the canal,

Less than we fear the love of God.

We acknowledge our trespass, our weak-
 ness, our fault; we acknowledge

That the sin of the world is upon our
 heads; that the blood of the martyrs
 and the agony of the saints

Is upon our heads.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Blessed Thomas, pray for us.

PURPLE DUST*

By
SEAN O'CASEY

"Away from all mouldherin' ashes we row
Far away O!"

THIS EXULTANT RIME IS SUNG AT THE end of *Purple Dust* by master-mason O'Killigain as he flees from the Tudor manor, symbol of ancient oppression and decay, that he has been employed to restore. This gothic relic will shortly be engulfed by the rising river on which O'Killigain's barque is speeding him and his abducted Irish bride to a symbolic freedom. The lilting lines serve us well as threefold epitome: of the scant but meaningful dramatic action of this allegorical comedy; of its author's own abandonment of a free, turbulent, but, as he tragically had found it, an unregenerate Ireland; and, lastly and more importantly, the same simple lines throw into clear perspective the play's complex allegory in which many farcically amusing characters embody various types of insincerity and degeneracy, each masked by a show of noble intent. They have suddenly found themselves derelicts in the "purple dust" soon to be swept away by a reawakened and genuine humanity, symbolized by the rising river. To such rebirth, whether that of his beloved Erin of legend or that of all human enlightenment, O'Casey long ago dedicated his acknowledged genius.

His masterpieces of the 1920's, *The Shadow of a Gunman*, *Juno and the Paycock*,¹ and *The Plough and the Stars*, brought to Dublin's Abbey Theatre a virtually new type of reportorial tragedy based on the sanguinary rioting of Sinn Feiners against Black and Tans, as viewed with laudable detachment by the dramatist and pictured with unsurpassed realism in Irish dialect, which no one has used more forcefully or with a keener sense of its humor, its musical rhythm, and its idiomatic imagery.

The sensational success, particularly of

the second of these plays, had abruptly raised a hardly known writer of forty to high rank among world dramatists, but the last, *The Plough and the Stars*, because of its detached candor, touched off the worst of the Abbey Theatre riots, and throughout nationalist Ireland O'Casey found himself a victim of insult and abuse. Disillusioned and embittered, he took refuge in London in 1927 and his *The Silver Tassie* submitted to the Abbey management was denied production. In stubborn anger he refused to offer that theatre another new play, and he has never done so, although that company later staged *The Silver Tassie* and other of his plays. No ostensible reconciliation has yet resulted.

More disturbing to his admirers everywhere has been O'Casey's abandonment, for aesthetic reasons, of conventional play forms and consistently realistic treatment of characters and story, which in the earlier work had been the principal attraction. He now turned to the newer techniques of symbolism and allegory (as in *Purple Dust*), expressionism (as in *Within the Gates*), and pronounced lyricism, not only in song but also in dialogue. This dialogue abounds in outspoken ridicule of religious and social beliefs and practices, without any clearly defined ideology to offer, except scorn for man-made codes and faith in free and independent mentality like the author's own.

As with many other dramatists of literary stature bent on dramatic liberation and reform, O'Casey seems to regard the stabilized naturalism of a Gorky, a Chekhov, a Galsworthy, or of his own earlier self, much as the foreman O'Killigain and the Second Workman in this play, who are clearly spokesmen for the dramatist, view the stately Ormond Manor as once a thing of strength and beauty but now "a heap of purple dust" that "will vanish away with the flow of the river."

* Used with the permission of The Macmillan Company.

¹ Included in *Contemporary Drama 37 Plays* and *Contemporary Drama 9 Plays*.

How such changes in O'Casey's artistry will affect his standing has been a subject of futile debate. Favorable critics maintain that his genius has attained to such heights that today's playgoers, fed on frothy fare of stage and screen, cannot grasp, much less appreciate, this modernist outpouring of Celtic genius. Those with opposite views find his profusion of abstruse dialogue and his less consistent realism of character and story difficult and unexciting in the theatre. Obviously the later plays have had far less stage success than the earlier, and surely this falling off cannot be explained merely on the ground that they are less realistic and more imaginative in expression; such qualities have not barred Shakespeare from the theatre, and not many years ago, four highly poetic and unconventional dramas of Christopher Fry were successful in a single London season.

There are simpler and more obvious reasons for O'Casey's theatre decline: an overdependence on the charm of superbly phrased dialect and upon individually amusing episodes at the expense of engrossing interest in the action of the play as a whole: action, that is, in the truly dramatic sense and not merely stage business, of which there is abundance, whether serious or comic, in any O'Casey play. The gripping, climactic conflict so prominent in his first successes has been minimized where it is felt at all. In short, O'Casey has deliberately eviscerated his drama of the most essential element of theatre success and made of himself a chamber dramatist to be more enjoyed in the study than in the theatre.

Such a work, in fact, is *Purple Dust*, although it is somewhat more stageworthy than others, as George Jean Nathan believed it to be when upon its publication he expressed

astonishment that it had attracted no producer. But in that year of 1940, apart from any other aspect it may have had, this play must have seemed repugnant to even a large-minded Britisher, for no patriot could have endured its belittling ridicule of the two silly and vicious settlers from London; and there is not very much in the characters and action to attract a sensitive Irish auditor, whether at home or abroad.

But this play deserves careful study and it is neither difficult nor uninteresting to read. And, as always with O'Casey, the rhythmic, witty dialect is immensely entertaining in itself. The comparison of its method with that of *Juno and the Paycock* is instructive. Its loosely connected scenes follow each other like numbers in a vaudeville, with but faint intimations of its symbolism until it becomes impressively apparent at the close. Nor is an awareness of the deeper dramatic motives underlying its burlesque lampooning strong at any time during the play: the age-old British-Irish antagonism; commercialism against mutual helpfulness; bartered affection versus genuine love; insular spirit defeating friendliness—and all like “clouds of dust” dimming a golden dawn. The characters tainted by the dust are obvious; those of the dawn—spiritual kindred of the dramatist—are foreman Jack and Second Workman Philib, whose reclamation of the commercially enslaved loveliness of Erin's Avril and Souhaun provides the directive action in which symbol and drama clearly merge.

But throughout, our greater pleasure has been “listenin’,” as Souhaun says, “to a voice that’s makin’ gold embroidery out o’ dancin’ words.” Indeed, this play is what its author once said drama should be: “a commentary on life itself.”

SEAN O'CASEY

Born 1880, Dublin, Ireland.

Common laborer from the slums, a self-educated member of the Anglican Church, the Gaelic League, and various labor unions.

1913–1917, Organizer and secretary of the Irish Citizen Army.

1918, His first publication: *History of the Citizen Army*.

1923, His first production by the Abbey Theatre: *The Shadow of a Gunman*. (He had begun writing plays as early as 1901, and not, as commonly supposed, because of interest in the Abbey Theatre.)

- 1926, The production of *The Plough and the Stars* precipitated rioting in the Abbey and attacks on O'Casey.
 1927, Took refuge in England where he has since lived.
 1928, Broke relations with the Abbey Theatre management. Continued playwriting, and has published many volumes, chiefly autobiographical. Avows communist ideology.

PLAYS

1918 *The Robe of Rosheen* (one-act play published in a Republican periodical). 1923 *The Shadow of a Gunman*. 1923 *Cathleen Listens In* (produced by the Abbey, not published). 1923 *The Cooing of the Doves* (one-act, later used as Act II of *The Plough and the Stars*). 1924 *Juno and the Paycock*. 1924 *Nannie's Night Out*. 1926 *The Plough and the Stars*. 1928 *The Silver Tassie*. 1933 *Within the Gates*. 1935 *The End of the Beginning*. 1940 *The Star Turns Red*. 1940 *Purple Dust*. 1942 *Red Roses for Me*. 1946 *Oak Leaves and Lavender*. 1947 *A Pound on Demand*. 1949 *Cock-a-Doodle-Andy*. 1951 *Hall of Healing*. 1951 *Bedtime Story* (one-act). 1951 *Time to Go*. 1954 *The Bishop's Bonfire*. 1958 *The Drums of Father Ned* (first entitled *The Night is Whispering*).

WRITINGS ON DRAMA

The Flying Wasp, 1937. *The Green Crow*, 1956. *On Playwriting and Before Curtain Rise* (both prefaced to *Plays of Sean O'Casey*, 1954). Much comment and criticism in the autobiographical volumes: *I Knock at the Door*, 1939; *Pictures in the Hallway*, 1942; *Drums Under the Window*, 1946; *Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well*, 1949; *Rose and Crown*, 1952. *Sunset and Evening Star*, 1954. "The Plays of Sean O'Casey" in *The Nineteenth Century and After*, CLV, pp. 399-402, September, 1928.

PURPLE DUST

Cast of Characters

CYRIL POGES.

BASIL STOKE.

SOUHAUN, Cyril's Mistress.

AVRIL, Basil's Mistress.

BARNEY, Their Manservant.

CLOYNE, Their Maidservant.

O'KILLIGAIN, A Foreman Stonemason.

FIRST WORKMAN.

SECOND WORKMAN.

THIRD WORKMAN.

THE REVEREND GEORGE CANON CREEHEWEL,
P.P. of Clune na Geera.

THE POSTMASTER.

YELLOW-BEARDED WORKMAN.

THE FIGURE.

THE BULL.

THE SCENES

ACT ONE. *A room in an Old Tudor Mansion in Clune na Geera.*

ACT TWO. *The same.*

ACT THREE. *The same.*

TIME. *The present.*

ACT ONE

SCENE: *A wide, deep, gloomy room that was once part of the assembly or living-room of a Tudor-Elizabethan Mansion. The floor is paved with broad black and dull red flagstones. The walls are timbered with oak beams, and beams of the same wood criss-cross each other, forming the roof, so that the room looks somewhat like a gigantic cage. The beams are painted alternately, black and white, so as to show they are there and to draw attention to their beauty; but the paint makes them too conspicuous, and therefore ugly.*

On the right is a huge open fireplace, overhung by a huge hood. In the centre of the fireplace, is a big iron arm, with a swinging cross-piece, thrust out like a crane; from this cross-piece hangs a thick chain to which a big, shining copper kettle is attached. At the back are two rather narrow arched doorways, one towards the right, the other towards the left. Between these are two long, deep, mullioned windows. At the left, nearly opposite the fireplace, is a wider arched doorway leading to the entrance hall. Near the fireplace are two straight-backed seats, like infantile church pews, each big enough only to hold one person. A small Elizabethan or Jacobean table is somewhere near the centre of the room.

On this table is a vase in which are a collection of violets and primroses, mostly primroses.

It is about seven o'clock of an Autumn morning, fine, crisp, and fair.

[Three WORKMEN are seen in the room, two with shovels and one with a pickaxe. One with a shovel and the one with the pickaxe are standing near the archway leading to the entrance hall; the other, with a shovel, is beside the wide fireplace, looking curiously at it. The FIRST WORKMAN is a tall, lean man, with a foxy face; the SECOND WORKMAN is tall, too, and strongly built; he has a dreamy look, and has a dark, trim beard faintly touched with grey; the THIRD WORKMAN is stouter than the others, and not so tall. They're ALL roughly dressed in soiled clothes, and wear high rubber boots.]

First Workman. [Near the fireplace.] Well, of all the wondhers . . . A house that's half down an' it's waning over. Thrickin' th' rotten beams into a look of sturdiness with a coat of black an' white paint, an' they for long a dismal home even for the gnawin' beetle an' th' borin' worm.

Third Workman. [With the pickaxe.] They like that sort of thing.

First Workman. An' th' maid was tellin'

me they're goin' to invest in hins an' cows, an' make th' place self-supportin'.

Third Workman. An' th' two o' them business men, rollin' in money.

First Workman. Women you're not married to cost a lot to keep an' th' two with them'll dip deep into the oul' men's revenue. Goin' over to London done them a world o' good.

Third Workman. Irish, too, an' not a bit ashamed o' themselves.

First Workman. Ashamed is it? Isn't th' oulder one proclaimin' she's straight from th' Duke of Ormond?

Third Workman. An' we knowin' the two o' them well, as kids with patched petticoats an' broken shoes, runnin' round th' lanes o' Killnageera.

First Workman. God be good to her, anyway, for bringin' a bit o' th' doddherers' money to where it's needed.

Third Workman. Th' two poor English omadhauns won't have much when th' lassies decide it's time for partin'.

Second Workman. [*Who has been silently leaning on his shovel, looking dreamily ahead of him.*] That day'll hasten, for God is good. Our poets of old have said it often: time'll see th' Irish again with wine an' ale on th' table before them; an' th' English, barefoot, beggin' a crust in a lonely sthreet, an' th' weather frosty.

First Workman. Afther a reckless life, they need th' peace o' th' country.

Third Workman. [*Assuming a listening attitude.*] They're stirrin'.

[*Mr¹ CYRIL POGES, SOUHAUN, and BARNEY come in by one entrance at the back; AVRIL, BASIL STOKE, and CLOYNE from the other; they dance in what they think to be a country style, and meet in the centre, throwing their legs about while they sing. AVRIL has a garland of moonfaced daisies around her neck and carries a dainty little shepherd's crook in her hand. CYRIL POGES, a little wooden rake with a gaily coloured handle; SOUHAUN has a little hoe, garlanded with ribbons; CLOYNE, a dainty little hayfork; BARNEY a little reaping-hook; and BASIL STOKE a slim-handled little spade. Each wears a white smock having on it the stylized picture of an animal: on POGES' a pig; on BASIL's a hen; on SOUHAUN's a cow; on AVRIL's a duck; on CLOYNE's a sheep; on BARNEY's a cock.*]

POGES is a man of sixty-five years of age. He was, when young, a rather good-looking man, but age has altered him a lot. He is now inclined to be too stout, with a broad chest, and too prominent belly; his face is a little too broad, too ruddy, and there are perceptible bags of flesh under his eyes. He has a large head, getting bald in front, though behind and over his ears the hair is long, fairly thick, and tinged with grey. He has a fussy manner, all business over little things, wants his own way at all times, and persuades himself that whatever he thinks of doing must be for the best, and expects everyone else to agree with him. He is apt to lose his temper easily, and to shout in the belief that that is the only way to make other people fall in with his opinions. He has now persuaded himself that in the country peace and good-will are to be found, and expects that everyone else should find them there, too. Under the smock he is dressed in morning clothes, and wears a tall hat.

BASIL STOKE is a long, thin man of thirty, with a rather gloomy face which he thinks betokens dignity, made gloomier still by believing that he is something of a philosopher. His cheeks are thin and their upper bones are as sharp as a hatchet. He is clean-shaven, and the thin hair on his half-bald head is trimly brushed back from his forehead. His eyes are covered with a pair of large horn-rimmed glasses. Under the smock he is dressed in jacket, plus-fours, and a cap.

SOUHAUN is a woman of thirty-two years of age. She must have been a very handsome girl and she is still very good-looking, in a more matronly way. She has the fine figure of her young friend—AVRIL, but her arms and her legs have grown a little plumper. She is still attractive enough to find attention from a good many men, when her young friend is out of the way. She wears, under the smock, what a lady would usually wear in the morning.

CLOYNE is a stoutly-built, fine-looking girl of twenty-six or so, and wears the servant's cap and dress under her smock. BARNEY is a middle-aged man with a discontented face and a muttering manner. Under his smock he wears the usual dress of a butler.

AVRIL is dressed, under her smock, in gay pyjamas.]

¹ This play follows such British spellings as "Mr", "Dr", "colour".

Poges. [*Singing.*]

Deep in the country, we're all
right,
Man's delight,
Day and night,
Far from the city's frantic fight.

All. Here in the bosky countrie!

Souhaun. [*Singing.*]

Rural scenes are now our joy:
Farmer's boy,
Milkmaid coy,
Each like a newly-painted
toy.

All. Deep in the bosky countrie!

Avril. [*Singing.*]

By poor little man the town was
made,
To degrade
Man and maid;
God's green thought in a little
green shade,
Made the bosky countrie!

Chorus [*All.*]

Hey, hey, the country's here,
The country's there,
It's everywhere!
We'll have it, now, last thing at
night,
And the very first thing in the
morning!

Basil. [*Singing.*]

Our music, now, is the cow's sweet
moo,
The pigeon's coo,
The lark's song, too,
And the cock's shrill
cock-a-doodle-doo.

All. [*Together.*]

Trees and nuts and
bramble flowers,
Shady bowers,
Sun and showers,
Bees and birds and all are ours,
Deep in the bosky countrie!

All. [*Chorus.*]

Hey, hey, the country's here,
The country's there,
It's everywhere!
We'll have it, now, last thing at
night,
And the very first thing in the
morning!

[As they are singing the last lines of the chorus for the second time, those who have come in by the left entrance go out by the right one; and those who have come in by the right entrance, go out by the left one.]

THE WORKMEN stand silent for a few

moments, watching the places where the singers disappeared.]

First Workman. Well, God help the poor omadhauns! It's a bad sign to see people actin' like that, an' they sober.

Third Workman. A s thrange crowd they are, to come gallivantin' outa the city to a lonely an' inconsiderate place like this.

First Workman. At home, now, they'd be sinkin' into their first sleep; because they're in the country they think the thing to do is to get up at the crack o' dawn.

Third Workman. An' they killin' themselves thryin' to look as if the country loved them all their life.

First Workman. With the young heifer gaddin' round with next to nothin' on, goadin' the decency an' circumspection of the place.

Third Workman. An' her eyes wiltin' when she sees what she calls her husband, an' widenin' wondherfully whenever they happen to light on O'Killigain.

First Workman. A handsome, hefty young sthripling, with a big seam in his arm that he got from a bullet fired in Spain.

Third Workman. Forever fillin' the place with reckless talk against the composure of the Church in the midst of the way things are now.

Second Workman. Ay, an' right he is, if ears didn't shut when his mind was speakin'.

First Workman. [*To SECOND WORKMAN.*] If I was you, I'd be dumb as well, for Canon Creehewel's mad to dhrive him outa th' place, with all who hear him.

Second Workman. [*Fervently.*] There's ne'er another man to be found as thrue or as clever as him till you touch a city's centre, an' if he goes, I'll go, too.

First Workman. It's what but they're thryin' to be something else beside themselves.

Third Workman. They'd plunge through any hardship to make themselves believe they are what they never can become.

Second Workman. [*Dolorously.*] An' to think of two such soilifyin' females bein' born in Ireland, an' denizenin' themselves here among decent people!

Third Workman. Whissht; here's the boss, O'Killigain.

[O'KILLIGAN comes in from the side entrance, with a short straight-edge in his hand. He is a tall, fair young man of twenty-five or twenty-six years. He has a rough, clearly-cut face, dogged-looking when he is roused, and handsome when he is in a good humour, which is

often enough. He is clean-shaven, showing rather thick, but finely formed lips. His hair, though cut short, is thick and striking. When he speaks of something interesting him, his hands make graceful gestures. He has had a pretty rough life, which has given him a great confidence in himself; and wide reading has strengthened that confidence considerably. He is dressed in blue dungarees and wears a deep yellow muffler, marked with blue decoration, round his neck. He is humming a tune as he comes in, and goes over toward the MEN.]

O'Killigain. 'Morra, boys.

All the MEN. 'Morra, Jack.

O'Killigain. [With a gesture pointing to where he thinks the people of the house may be.] Up yet?

First Workman. Up, is it? Ay, an' dancin' all about the place.

O'Killigain. Bright colours, in cloth and paint, th' ladies want, they say; jazz patterns, if possible, say the two dear young ladies: well, they'll want pretty bright colours to cheer up this morgue.

Third Workman. It's a strange thing, now, that a man with money would like to live in a place, lonesome an' cold enough to send a shiver through a year-old dead man!

O'Killigain. Because they think it has what they call a history. Everything old is sacred in every country. Give a house a history, weave a legend round it, let some titled tom-fool live or die in it—and some fool-mind will see loveliness in rottenness and ruin.

First Workman. A nephew of the Duke of Ormond, they say, dhrank himself to death in it, and the supernumary wife of the older codger says she's a direct descendant of the nephew; and she says they've come from the darkness an' danger of England to settle down in what is really their proper home.

O'Killigain. And they're goin' to have the spoons and forks an' knives done with what they say is the Ormond crest; Ormond's motto will shine out from their notepaper; and this tumble-down oul' shack is to be christened Ormond Manor.

Second Workman. [Savagely.] The English get hurryin' off with the ensign privilege of an Irish gentleman!

Third Workman. Isn't it sthrange how many'll fall for a mere name? Remember oul' Miss MacWilliam who used to faint with ecstasy the times she told the story of sittin' for a second in the King o' Denmark's chair; an' oul' Tom Mulligan who swag-gered round for years afther the son o' the

Earl of Shibereen had accidentally spit in his eye!

O'Killigain. Well, men, we'd better make a start.

First Workman. [Warningly.] Shush! Here's the flower o' Finea!

[AVRIL comes in from the left entrance. She is a pretty girl of twenty-one or so, inclined, at times, to be a little romantic, and is very much aware of her good looks. She is far from being unintelligent, but does little and cares less about developing her natural talents. Her eyes are large and expressive, but sometimes sink into a hardened lustre. She is inclined to think that every good-looking young fellow, rich or poor, should fall for her pretty face and figure, and is a little worried if one of them doesn't. She adopts a free and easy and very unnatural attitude when she is talking to workmen. She is dressed now in gay scarlet trousers, widening at the ends, and very tight around her hips and bottom; low-cut black silk bodice, slashed with crimson, half hidden by a red and white striped scarf thrown carelessly round her shoulders—and black shoes. She trips over in a slow dancing way to where the WORKMEN are standing, and as she comes in she lilts "Nora O'Neale," or "Rose of Tralee."]

She trips over in a slow dancing way to where the WORKMEN are standing, and as she comes in she lilts "Nora O'Neale," or "Rose of Tralee."

Avril. [Close to the WORKMEN.] Top o' the mornin', boys!

O'Killigain. [Humouring her.] Same to you, miss, an' many of them, each of them fairer an' finer than the finest of all that ever brought the soft light o' the dawn at the peep o' day into your openin' eyes.

Avril. It's meself that hopes you like the lovely house you're renovatin'?

O'Killigain. An' tell me who wouldn't like the lovely house we're renovatin'? It's a dark man he'd be, without a stim o' light, an' destitute o' feelin'.

First Workman. [Enthusiastically.] Sure, miss, it's dumb with many wondhers we've all been for years that no one o' the well-to-do laid hands suddenly on the house to give it the glory again that musta been here throughout the jewel'd days of the times gone by!

Avril. When it's thoroughly restored it'll be a pleasure an' a pride to the whole district.

O'Killigain. [With just a touch of sarcasm in his voice.] Sure, when we're done with it wouldn't it be fit for the shelter an' ayse an' comfort of Nuad of the Silver Hand,

were he with us now, or of the great Fergus himself, of the bright bronze chariots?

Avril. Or even the nephew of Ormond's great Duke, the warlike ancestor of my very own cousin.

O'Killigain. An' all the people here who are anything'll be mad with envy that they hadn't seized holt of it to make it what it'll soon be shown to be!

[AVRIL lilts a reel and dances lightly about the room. The FIRST and THIRD WORKMEN join in the lilting of the air. As she is passing O'Killigain he catches her excitedly and whirls her recklessly round the room till she is breathless, while the two MEN quicken the time of the lilting.]

O'Killigain. *[To AVRIL while she stands breathlessly before him.]* Bow to your partner. *[AVRIL bows to him and he bows to her. Indicating the two MEN who lilited the tune of the reel.]* Bow, bow to the bards.

[She bows to the two MEN, and when she has bent to the bow, O'Killigain gives her a sharp skelp on the behind. She straightens herself with a little squeal of pain and a sharp cry of indignation and faces him angrily.]

Avril. *[Indignantly.]* You low fellow, what did you dare do that for! How dare you lay your dirty hands on a real lady! That's the danger of being friendly with a guttersnipe! Wait till you hear what Mr Basil Stoke'll say, when he hears what you've done. Get out of the room, get out of the house—go away, and never let your ugly face be seen here again!

O'Killigain. *[With some mockery in his voice.]* Sure, I meant no harm, miss; it was simply done in the excitement of the game. *[To FIRST WORKMAN.]* Wasn't it, now, Bill?

Third Workman. Ay, was it, miss. Sure, th' poor man lost his caution in the gaiety of the gay tune.

O'Killigain. I did it all in play; I thought you'd like it.

Avril. *[Sarcastically.]* Oh, did you? Well, I didn't like it, and I don't allow anyone to take advantage of any effort I make to treat workmen as human beings.

Second Workman. *[Maliciously.]* If I was asked anything, I'd say I saw a spark of pleasure in the flame of pain that came into her eyes when she was hot!

Avril. *[Furiously—to the MEN.]* Be off, you, and let me speak alone to this young man! I don't require any explanation from such as you; so be off, and I'll deal with this

fellow! *[The THREE WORKMEN slide away out of the scene. With a gentler tone in her voice.]* Never, never do a thing like that again, young man.

O'Killigain. *[With mocking earnestness.]* Never again, young lady. Sure, you looked so handsome, gay, and young, that my thoughts became as jaunty an' hilarious as your little dancin' feet.

Avril. Never again, mind you—especially when others are here to stand and gape. *[She goes over and feels the muscle of his arm.]* There's too much power in that arm to give a safe and gentle blow to a poor young girl.

O'Killigain. Ashamed I am of the force that sent a hand to hit a girl of grace, fit to find herself walkin' beside all the beauty that ever shone before the eyes o' man since Helen, herself, unboud her thrasses, to dance her wild an' willin' way through the shreetes o' Throy!

Avril. It's I that know the truth is only in the shine o' the words you shower on me, as ready to you as the wild flowers a love-shaken, innocent girl would pick, in a hurry, outa the hedges, an' she on her way to Mass.

O'Killigain. Is it after tellin' me that that you are, an' your own words dancin' out as fair an' fine as the best o' mine?

Avril. An' why wouldn't they, now, an' me that sang me song, first runnin' me years in, and runnin' them out, in th' fields an' roads that skirted the threes an' hills o' Killnageera? But is there an Irishman goin' who hasn't a dint o' wonder in his talkin'?

O'Killigain. I never met many who had it; but some evening somewhere away from me mother, who *[Proudly.]* once won a grand gold medal at a Feis for a song of her own, put together between the times of bringin' up six children an' puttin' an odd flower on the grave of the one that died.

Avril. You must sing me a few of your songs, sometime.

O'Killigain. Now if you'd like to listen, an' you think that the time is handy.

Avril. Not now; we might be disturbed; but some evening, somewhere away from here.

O'Killigain. I will, an' welcome; some of them, too, that have been set in a little book, lookin' gay an' grand, for all the world to see. Come; listen—*[In a mocking whisper.]*—and brave the wrath of a gouty, doughty Basil Stoke.

Avril. *[With a toss of her head.]* That thing! *[With bitter contempt.]* A toddler thricking with a woman's legs; a thief without the power to thieve the thing he covets;

a louse burrowing in a young lioness's belly; a perjurer in passion; a gutted soldier bee whose job is done, and still hangs on to life!

O'Killigain. [*Embracing her tightly.*] To-night, or tomorrow night, then, beside the blasted Rowan three.

Avril. [*With fright in her voice.*] The blasted Rowan tree! Oh, not there, not there—for evil things sit high, sit low in its twisty branches; and lovers, long ago, who leaned against it, lost their love, or died, No, no, not there: a saint himself would shudder, if he had to pass it on a dusky night, with only a sly chit of a moon in the sky to show the way.

O'Killigain. Oh, foolish girl, there never can be evil things where love is living. Between the evil things an' us, we'll make the sign of the rosy cross, an' it's blossomin' again the dead an' dhry thing will be, an' fruit will follow.

[*They sing "The Ruin'd Rowan Tree" together.*]

THE RUINED ROWAN TREE

A sour-souled Cleric, passing near,
Saw lovers by a rowan tree.
He curs'd its branches, berries, bloom,
Through time and through eternity.
Now evil things are waiting where
Fond lovers once found joy.
And fear of love now crowns the thought,
Of frighten'd girl—, of frighten'd boy.

The rowan tree's black as black can be,
On Killnageera's lonely hill.
And where lovers whispers once were warm,
Now blows a wind both cold and shrill.
Oh would I had a lover brave,
Who'd mock away its power;
I'd lie there firm within his arms,
And fill with love one glorious hour.

Then branches bare would leaf again,
And twisted ones grow straight and true.
And lovers caught within its ken,
Would nothing fear and nothing rue;
Its bloom would form a bridal veil,
Till summer days were sped.
Then autumn berries red would fall,
Like rubies on each nesting head.

Avril. [*After a little hesitation.*] Undher the Rowan three, then, with you.

[*As the sound of voices are heard she holds her tight for a few moments, kisses her several times, then lets her go. He goes over and examines a wall,*

where a telephone is evidently being put in. AVRIL, all demure, stands at the other end of the room, watching him. SOUHAUN, followed by POGES and BASIL, comes into the room. She is carrying a large, two-handled earthenware jug in her right hand, and two coloured cushions under her left arm. CYRIL POGES is carrying a large coloured picture of himself in a gold frame; and BASIL STOKE, too, is bearing a picture of himself in a silver frame; he has a hammer sticking out of his side pocket. CLOYNE follows them in with a six-step A-ladder. POGES and STOKE are wearing gum boots, reaching to their thighs, and bright scarves round their necks. POGES and BASIL rest the pictures against a wall.]

Souhaun. [*To AVRIL.*] Oh, here you are, with Mr O'Killigain. We were wondering where you were. We've a lot to do, dear, before we can get the house comfortable; so don't keep Mr O'Killigain from his work. [*She leaves the jug down in a corner.*] Filled with gay flowers, Cyril, this jug'll be just the thing on your quatto-centro desk-bureau.

Poges. Lovely, darling. [*To O'KILLIGAIN.*] We've been for a run over the fields, O'Killigain; lovely; feel as fresh as a daisy after it. [*Indicating the boots.*] Great comfort, these boots, in the long damp grass. Saw a swarm of rabbits—quaint creatures. Such alacrity! Amazing way they jump.

Basil. With these and rubber hats and rubber coats, we'll be able to weather anything. I've got the hammer. Have you got the nails?

Poges. I forgot them. I'll get them now.

Basil. And I'll get the string.

[*One goes out left, and the other right.*]

Souhaun. [*To CLOYNE.*] Hold this curtain stuff end, Cloyne, till we see its width.

[*CLOYNE holds one end of the stuff, while SOUHAUN holds the other. O'KILLIGAIN, pretending to be interested, bends over CLOYNE, and stretching out a hand to handle the stuff, half puts his arm around CLOYNE'S neck, who is very well pleased.*]

O'Killigain. Finely woven as a plover's wing it is. No way odd it would look as a cloak for the lovely Emer; an', if it hung from th' sturdy shoulders of Queen Maev, herself, she'd find a second glory!

Souhaun. [*Displeased at his covert attention to CLOYNE.*] Over here, Cloyne, please; hold this end.

[*SOUHAUN and CLOYNE change places,*

and O'Killigain bends over SOUHAUN.]

Avril. [To O'Killigain.] I must have a chat with that man working for you who knows everything worth knowing about Ireland's past and present, Mr O'Killigain.

O'Killigain. [Very seriously.] And, please, miss, don't try to make fun of him. Touch him not with a jibe, for he's a wandherin' king holdin' th' ages be th' hand.

Souhaun. How could a common worker be a king, O'Killigain?

O'Killigain. Easier than for a king to be a common worker. Th' king o' a world that doesn't exist was a carpenter.

Avril. Where is the real world to be found, then?

O'Killigain. Where I have found it often, an' seek to find it still.

Avril. And where's that place to be found?

O'Killigain. With the bitterness an' joy blendin' in a pretty woman's hand; with the pity in her breast; in th' battlin' beauty of her claspin' arms; an' rest beside her when th' heart is tired.

Cloyne. Sure, it's only makin' fun of us all he is.

O'Killigain. Softer an' safer than St. Patrick's Breastplate is a woman's breast to save a man from the slings of life.

[Singing softly, moving a little away.
Slyly towards the WOMEN.]

Come in, or go out, or just stay at the door,
With a girl on each arm an' who standin' before;

Sure, the more that I have, the more I adore,
For there's life with the lassies,
Says Rory O'More!

Oh, courtin's an illigant, gorgeous affray,
When it's done in the night, or just done in the day;

When joy has been spent, sure, there's joy still in store;
For there's life with the lassies,
Says Rory O'More!

When all has been done, though nothin' been said,

Deep in the green grass, or at home in the bed,

To ev'ry brave effort, we'll yield an encore;
For there's life with the lassies,
Says Rory O'More!

[As he ends his song, POGES and BASIL return, the one with the nails, the other with the string-wire.]

Poges. [To O'Killigain—briskly.] The garage is well in hands, isn't it, O'Killigain?

O'Killigain. [Who has tapped the wall, and is shaking his head.] Yes, well in hands.

Poges. [Enthusiastically.] Good, man; when it's done I'll get a first-class artist over from London to paint and make it exactly like a little Tudor dwelling, so that it won't in any way distort the beauty of the fine old house. What do you say, O'Killigain? [O'Killigain is silent.] Eh?

O'Killigain. I didn't speak.

Basil. [Who has moved over, and is looking ecstatically up at an end wall.] Early Tudor, I think; yes, early Tudor, I'll swear. A great period, a great period. Full of flow, energy, colour, power, imagination, and hilarity.

O'Killigain. [Tapping the wall beside him—ironically.] And this is middle Tudor—not a doubt about it.

Poges. [Looking ecstatically at the other end wall.] Late Tudor, this one, I'm sure. Ah, England had no equal then. Look at the Lionheart, eh? Smashed the infidel, smashed him out of Jerusalem into the desert places. What was his name, follower of the Prophet? You remember, Hegira, the white stone, or was it a black stone?—Oh, what was the bounder's name?

Souhaun. [Helpfully.] Tuttuttankamen, dear?

Poges. [Scornfully.] Tuttuttankamen! My God, woman, he was only the other day!

Avril. [More helpfully.] The Mahdi, dear?

Poges. [More scornfully.] The Mahdi! [Plaintively.] Is there no one here knows a line of the history of his country!

Basil. [With complacent confidence.] Ghenghis Khan.

Poges. [Emphatically.] Ghenghis Khan! That was the name of the bounder driven from Jerusalem by the Lionhearted Richard. And, maybe he was actually in this very house. It's all very moving. [To O'Killigain.] I imagine I hear the clank, clank, clank of armour when I walk the rooms, and see the banners and banneroles, with their quaint designs, fluttering from the walls! Don't you feel the lovely sensation of er—er—er, old, unhappy, far-off things, and battles long ago? [O'Killigain is silent. Insistently.] Don't you feel something of all that, O'Killigain, eh?

O'Killigain. [Quietly.] I let the dead bury their dead.

Souhaun. Oh, don't worry Mr O'Killigain, Cyril; he's a work-a-day worker, and neither understands nor takes an interest in these things.

Poges. Nonsense; O'Killigain's an intel-

ligent man, and is only too glad to learn a little about the finer things of life; and to think of great things past and gone is good—isn't that so?

O'Killigain. Occasionally, perhaps; but not to live among them. Life as it is, and will be, moves me more.

Poges. Come, come; we mustn't be always brooding upon the present and the future. Life is too much with us, *O'Killigain*; late and soon, getting and spending, we lay waste our powers. But you've never read good old Wordsworth, I suppose?

O'Killigain. As a matter of fact, I have.

Poges. You have? Well, that promotes a fellowship between us, eh? Great man, great man; but a greater poet, eh?

O'Killigain. A tired-out oul' blatherer; a man who made a hiding-place of his own life; a bladder blown that sometimes gave a note of music; a poet who jailed the striving of man in a moral lullaby; a snail to whom God gave the gleam of the glowworm; a poet singing the song of safety first!

Poges. [*Irritated.*] Oh! Is that the result of the new schooling? I'm afraid very few will agree with you, my friend. Well, well, we've more to do than discuss the merit of a poet; so hasten on the work of building the garage, like a good man.

O'Killigain. [*Bowing ironically.*] I go, sir. [*He goes out.*]

Poges. [*To the OTHERS.*] Isn't that a shocking example of bad taste and ignorance? [*TO SOUHAUN.*] There's one of your fine countrymen for you, dear.

Souhaun. Well, Cyril dear, you know you were just trying to show off to him. A few little quotations, drummed into you at school, is all you know of Wordsworth. You're never tired of saying that poetry isn't your cup of tea.

Poges. [*Angry.*] Modern poetry, modern poetry isn't my cup of tea; and I don't care who knows it. But I don't deny the past. Tradition—that is our strength in time of trouble; tradition—keep as close as we can to the beauties of the past—the, the glory that was Rome and the grandeur that was Greece—Shakespeare knew what he was talking about when he said that.

Souhaun. But Shakespeare didn't say that, dear.

Basil. Well, by living in this old, historic house, we're keeping close to the old traditions.

Souhaun. [*Dubiously.*] It's beginning to feel a little cold and damp to me.

Poges. [*Indignantly.*] Cold? What are you talking about? Damp? Nonsense. Were

it warmer, it would begin to feel uncomfortable. What do you say, Cloyne?

Cloyne. [*Who has been dusting the walls with a long-handled duster.*] I feel quite cozy, sir; though there is a bit of breeze blowing down the chimney.

Poges. [*Shivering a little.*] Eh? Cozy, eh? Of course you do; we all do. Think, too, of the loveliness all round us; river, lake, valley, and hill. [*Lilting.*] Angels often pausing here, doubt if Eden were more fair. Here, we have the peace of Eden.

Souhaun. And you must admit, dear, that we Irish are a simple, hearty, honest, and obliging people.

Basil. [*Enthusiastically.*] They're dears. All I've met of them are dears; so quaint and charming—they are sweet. They need control, though; they need control.

Poges. I agree. All the Irish are the same. Bit backward, perhaps, like all primitive peoples, especially now, for they're missing the example and influence of the gentry; but delightful people, all the same. They need control, though; oh, yes, they need it badly.

Basil. We must get to really know the country; it's one thing to be sensitive about the country scene, and quite another to understand it. To be one with the green grass; to be, metaphorically, in the trees with the squirrels; to march with the seasons; processional and recessionary: in short to speak to mother earth and let mother earth speak to us.

Poges. [*Heartily.*] Quite right, Basil, we must get to know the country so that everything in it is natural to us. [*Lilting.*] To play and to sow, to reap and to mow, and to be a farmer's boy-oy-oy. The different trees, for example, to call them by their names the instant we see them.

Avril. In winter or summer.

Poges. Quite. In the summer by their fruits.

Avril. Trees don't have fruits, Cyril.

Poges. Of course not. I mean barks and branches. It will be a joy to say to some ignorant visitor from the city: That tree? Oh, that's just an oak; and that one there by the river is a—a—

Avril. Gooseberry tree, Cyril.

Poges. A lilac, or something. [*TO AVRIL.*] Don't be funny. This is a serious matter.

Cloyne. We mustn't forget the hens, either, sir.

Poges. Hens? Yes, of course—the hens. A fine idea. Yes, we'll have to have hens; a first-class strain, though; nothing else would be of any use.

Cloyne. A first-class strain, of course.

Poges. And a cow as well.

Avril. A cow might be dangerous.

Poges. Dangerous? Nonsense; if he was, then we'd simply have to keep him in a cage. [*He sets up a stepladder, mounts it, and holds up his picture against the wall.*] How does that look?

Souhaun. [*Taking no notice.*] First of all, we must get to know the nature and names of all the wild flowers of the district.

Poges. [*Letting the picture rest on the ground, leaning over it and turning towards the rest.*] Especially the wild flowers that Shakespeare loved, the, the—er—er— [*His eye catches sight of primroses in a little vase on the table.*] —the primrose for instance; you know—a primrose by the river's brim, a yellow primrose was to him, but it was nothing more; though we all actually know all there is to be known about the little primrose.

Basil. [*Letting his picture rest on the ground, and leaning over the top so that he at one end of the room, and POGES at the other, look like preachers in pulpits, panelled with their own portraits.*] That's just ignorant complacency. Of course, if we regard, assume, or look at the plant purely as a single entity, then a primrose is a primrose, and there's nothing more to be said about it.

Poges. Well, you can't assume that the primrose may be an elm tree, can you?

Basil. [*Quickly.*] Don't interrupt me for a minute, please. If we take the primrose, however, into our synthetical consideration, as a whole, or, a priori, as a part, with the rest of the whole or natural objects, or phenomena, then there is, or may be, or can be a possibility of thinking of the flower as of above the status, or substance, or quality of a fragment; and, consequently, correlating it with the whole, so that, to a rational thinker, or logical mind, the simple primrose is, or may become, what we may venture to call a universal. See?

Poges. [*Bewildered.*] Eh? Oh, yes; yes; no, no; yes, yes.

Souhaun. [*To CLOYNE.*] This discussion is a little too profound for you, Cloyne, so you'd better go and look after the fires in our room. [*CLOYNE rises and goes out.*]

Poges. What the devil are you trying to say, man?

Avril. [*With triumphant mockery.*] Aha, Cyril, you're caught!

Poges. [*Indignantly.*] Caught? Who's caught? Me? Nonsense, girl. He has simply compounded a fact with a fallacy. Can I see? Have I eyes? Yes. Very well, then. I see a flower with a root, leaves, and a blossom; I

ask myself, what is it? I answer, a primrose.

Basil. [*With languid scorn.*] So you say, sir.

Poges. [*Vehemently.*] So everyone says, man!

Basil. [*Leaning forward towards POGES.*] And what is a flower?

Poges. [*Furiously.*] A flower? Good god, a plant; a contrivance springing out of the earth; a vegetating combination of root, leaves, and blossom, sir!

Souhaun. Calmly, calmly, Cyril.

Basil. [*Leaning back again, and closing his eyes wearily.*] I know you'd just say that, sir. Words; you're merely using words. As easy to explain what a flower is as to tell me the height of the church steeple we can see from the front door.

Poges. You tell us its height.

Basil. From the front door, the height of a common pin; a little nearer, that of a walking stick; beneath it, some would say a hundred feet.

Poges. Clever fellow! [*Plaintively.*] First a primrose, then a steeple. [*Vehemently.*] Any fool knows the height of the steeple would be the length of its measurement!

Basil. [*Coolly—leaning forward towards POGES.*] Now tell me what is measurement and what is height, sir.

Poges. [*Inviting and scornful.*] You tell us, sir, please. [*Raising his hand, solemnly.*] Silence all. [*With a shout.*] Let the learned gentleman speak!

Souhaun. Now, Cyril, dear, discuss things quietly—remember you're an Englishman.

Basil. [*Calmly and languidly, as if he had not heard the loud voice of POGES.*] Try to think, sir, of a primrose, not as a primrose, per se, or of a steeple as a steeple, per se; but as simple objects and as substances outside of yourself.

Poges. [*Half frantic.*] Damn it, man, don't I know that primroses and steeples aren't simple substances inside of myself! Tell us how a man's to think of a primrose except as a primrose. He can't think of it as the dear little, sweet little shamrock of Ireland, can he? It is, indeed, a pitiful humiliation to have to listen to a half-educated fool!

Basil. [*Angry at last—setting the picture aside and taking a threatening step forward, AVRIL stepping in front to restrain him.*] A fool? Do you say I am a fool, sir? Is a man versed in all the philosophies of the world to be called a fool?

Avril. Basil, dear!

Souhaun. [*Getting in front of POGES.*] Cyril, darling, do remember that we are just

having a little friendly discussion about a common country flower!

Poges. [*Louder than ever.*] We came down here to get away from the world, and here we have the world thrust in front of us again. And a world, too, that tries to turn a primrose into a steeple!

Avril. [*Ironically.*] Basil is only trying to share his great knowledge with us.

Poges. He calls that knowledge, does he?

Souhaun. We must remember that Basil passed through Oxford, dear.

Poges. I don't care if he crept under it or flew over it; he's not going to punish me with what he picked up there.

Basil. [*A little tearfully.*] Considering that I have read every word written by Hume, Spinoza, Aristotle, Locke, Bacon, Plato, Socrates, and Kant, among others, I think my views ought to receive some respect from an ignorant man.

Poges. [*Boastfully.*] I was reared any old how; and here I am today, a money'd man, able to say to almost any man, come, and he cometh, and to almost any other man, go, and he goeth—and quick, too; able to shake hands with lords and earls, and call them by their Christian names. This—*[He touches his forehead.]*—and these—*[He holds out his hands.]*—did it all, without an inherited penny to help! *[He looks balefully at BASIL.]* And that's more than some of them can say. And I never passed through Oxford!

Souhaun. [*Soothingly—to BASIL.*] Come, now, go away for a few minutes, till he's calm again.

Basil. [*Tearfully and wrathfully.*] Invincible ignorance, God forgive it. Souhaun and you can see, Avril, that the virtue of respect and ready veneration that every right-minded Englishman has for the classic colleges has gone completely out of him.

Souhaun. [*Gently pushing BASIL out of the room.*] There, go, dear, till you recover yourself.

Basil. *Quisabit grunniudem expectio porcum*—what can one expect from a pig but a grunt? [*Going out—loudly.*] Invincible ignorance!

Poges. [*With the picture against the wall.*] There, how does that look here? [*Pityingly.*] Poor fool; juvenile mind, Souhaun, juvenile mind. But snappy enough, when he likes, and I, by cunning investment, have doubled his income for him. Ingratitude. [*Impatiently.*] Well, how does this look here?

Souhaun. I think the opposite wall would be more suitable, dear.

Avril. Where it is is best, mother.

Poges. Make up your minds, make up your minds!

Souhaun. Where it is, dear.

Poges. How is it for height?

Souhaun. A little higher.

Avril. A little lower.

Poges. One of you, one of you!

Souhaun. A little to the right, now.

Avril. A little to the left, now.

Poges. [*Lowering the picture to the ground.*] Which is it? How is it? What is it?

[CLOYNE comes in with a newspaper in her hand.]

Cloyne. [*To POGES.*] Your newspaper, sir—*the Financial Universe.*

[She leaves it on the table, and goes out again. POGES breaks open his paper, and is about to look at it when BARNEY appears at the left entrance. A sound of cackling is heard outside, and the loud lowing of a cow, and the crowing of cocks.]

Poges. [*With the paper half-spread before him.*] What the hell's that?

Barney. There's a man outside wants to know if you want any enterprisin' hins?

Poges. Any what?

Barney. Any hins, enterprisin' hins?

Poges. [*Impatiently.*] What the devil would I want with hins enterprising or unenterprising?

Barney. He says it's all over the counthry that you're searchin' high an' low for enterprisin' hins.

Cloyne. [*Appearing at the right entrance.*] There's two men here wantin' to know if you'd buy some prime an' startlin' cocks, goin' cheap?

First Workman. [*Appearing beside BARNEY, and shoving him aside to get in front.*] Excuse me, sir, but there's a friend o' mine just arrived with a cow that ud do any man good to see; a baste with a skin on her as shiny an' soft as the down on a first-class angel's wing; an' uddhers that'll make any man hard put to it to fetch enough pails to get the milk she gives!

Poges. Hins, cocks, and cows! [*To FIRST WORKMAN.*] What the hell do you take me for—a farmer's boy, or what?

Souhaun. It's all out of what you said about having hens and a cow in the place. [*To CLOYNE.*] And you, you little fool, must have gossiped it all over the district!

Cloyne. The only one I mentioned it to was Mr O'Killigain.

First Workman. [*Coming over to POGES.*]

Listen, sir, whisper now: Sthrike for th' honour of St. Patrick, while the iron's hot, for the cow. An' whisper, don't, for the love o' God, have anything to do with the hins an' cocks they're thryin' to palm off on you—there isn't one o' them that isn't th' essence of a false pretendher!

Souhaun. [*Angrily to CLOYNE.*] I won't have you gossiping to O'Killigain, spending time with him you ought to give getting the house in shape! The idea of discussing our private affairs with O'Killigain! If you think that O'Killigain has taken a fancy to you, you never made a bigger mistake, my girl.

Cloyne. [*Indignantly.*] Indeed, ma'am? Well, if Mr O'Killigain bids me the time o' day, I'll do the same, without any permission from you, ma'am!

Barney. [*Impatiently.*] An' what am I goin' to say to the man who's brought th' enterprisin' hins?

Poges. [*Shouting.*] Pack him off about his business! [*BARNEY goes out. To CLOYNE.*] And you do the same to the man who brought the startling cocks!

Souhaun. [*To CLOYNE.*] And no more trespassing on the good nature of O'Killigain, either!

Cloyne. [*Turning and facing SOUHAUN swiftly as she is going out.*] There's a withering woman, not a hundred miles from where I am, who ought to take her own advice, an' keep from thryin' her well-faded thricks of charm on poor Mr O'Killigain herself! [*She goes out.*]

Poges. [*Loudly and complainingly.*] Oh, stop these unseemly disputes in a house that ought to know only peace and dignity! Can't you try to act as the les grand dames and the les grander monseurs must have acted when they moved about here in this beautiful Tudor house? [*Angrily—to FIRST WORKMAN, who has been tugging at his sleeve for the last few moments.*] What the hell do you want, man?

First Workman. [*Earnestly, almost into POGES' ear.*] Listen, whisper, sir; take the bull be th' horns, an' get the cow, before she's gone. An' as for enterprisin' hins, or cocks that'll do you credit, leave it to me, sir, an' you'll go about with a hilarious look in your eyes!

Souhaun. [*Quickly—to AVRIL when POGES has disappeared round the entrance.*] Go on up, and flatter and comfort your old fool by ridiculing my old fool; and, when he's half himself again, wanting still more comfort and flattery, wheedle a cheque out of the old prattler.

Avril. [*Jumping up.*] Splendid idea!

[*She runs off out.*]

Souhaun. [*Calling after her.*] A fat one, mind you!

[*POGES comes back fuming, and brushing his coat where it touched the FIRST WORKMAN.*]

Poges. Are we to have no peace down here where peace was born? [*He takes up the paper again, and begins to read it.*] Uum. Ha, tin shares up again. Good. [*He buries his face in the paper.*] If it weren't for the damned taxes.

[*FIRST and THIRD WORKMEN peer around corner of the left entrance; then they come over quickly and smoothly to where POGES is buried in his paper, the FIRST WORKMAN standing on his left hand, and the THIRD WORKMAN on his right.*]

First Workman. [*Persuasively—toward POGES' paper.*] Listen here, sir: if it's genuine poultry you want, that lay with pride an' animation, an' not poor, insignificant fowls that set about th' business o' layin' like a member of Doyle Eireann makin' his maiden speech, I have a sthrain o' pullets that'll give you eggs as if you were gettin' them be steam!

Poges. [*Angrily—glancing over the top of his paper.*] Go away, go away, man, and don't be driving me mad!

Third Workman. [*Toward POGES' paper.*] Oh, the lies that some can tell to gain their own ends! Sure, sir, everyone knows that his poor hins are harmless; only venturin' to lay when heavy thundher frightens them into a hasty sign o' life! But it's meself can give you what you want, with a few lively cocks thrown in, to help them on with the work of furnishing nourishment to the whole world.

Poges. Go away; when I want poultry, I'll get into touch with the experts in the Department of Agriculture.

First Workman. [*Horried—partly to POGES and partly to the THIRD WORKMAN.*] Oh, listen to that, now! Didja hear that, ma'am? The Department of Agriculture, is it? Wisha, God help your innocence, sir. Sure, it's only a tiny time ago, that the same Department sent down a special strong covey o' cocks to improve the sthrain, an' only after a short probation, didn't they give the hins hysterics?

Poges. Hysterics! Good God!

First Workman. Ah, an' hadn't the frightened farmers to bring guns to bear on the cocks when they found their hins scattered over hill an' dale, lyin' on their backs with their legs in the air, givin' their last gasp,

an' glad to get outa the world they knew so well! The few mighty ones who survived were that stunned, that there wasn't an egg in th' place for years!

Poges. [*Good humouredly catching the MEN by the arm, and leading them to the left entrance.*] Now, now, man, I'm busy; I've some very important business to think about, and can't be bothered with hins!

First Workman. [*As they go out.*] Another time, sir; but don't think of the Department in this important matter; they'll send you hins'll paralyse the cocks, or cocks that'll paralyse the hins! [*They go out.*]

Poges. [*Returning and reading the paper.*] Childlike people, the Irish, aren't they? Hysteric hins! Dr what's his name, the fellow who said all man is moved by streams of thought that never enter his head—well, he'd find something to study down here. Well, it's delightful to be in a lovely house, in a lovely country, with nothing to think of but hysteric hins! [*He suddenly concentrates on something in the paper.*] I must have some of those shares. [*He runs to the telephone, and joggles and shakes it.*] What can be the matter with this Exchange—I can't hear a sound! [*To SOUHAUN.*] Call one of the workmen, will you? I must get through to London at once.

[*SOUHAUN runs out to call a workman.*]

In a moment or two, the SECOND WORKMAN comes into the room.

Second Workman. Is it me you want, sir?

Poges. Not you especially; I just want to know if you know, or anyone in the country knows why I can't connect with the Exchange?

Second Workman. Oh, is that all, sir?

Poges. [*Snappily.*] Is that all? Isn't it enough, fool?

Second Workman. [*Sharply.*] Who th' hell are you callin' a fool to?

Poges. [*Placatingly, but with some impatience.*] My good man, please let me know if you can say why the Exchange doesn't answer my call?

Second Workman. Ask anyone from one end o' the counthry to the other, or even O'Killigain, himself, if Philib O'Dempsey's a fool, an' see what they'll say. A sound mind, armed with firm education for seven long years in a steady school, an' now well fit to stand his ground in any argument, barrin' th' highest philosophies of the greatest minds mendin' th' world!

Poges. My good man, I only asked you a simple question.

Second Workman. [*Ignoring the remark.*] Comin' over here, thinkin' that all the glory

an' grandeur of the world, an' all the might of man was stuffed into a bulgin' purse, an' stickin' their tongue out at a race that's older than themselves by a little like a thousand years, greather in their beginnin' than they are in their prime; with us speakin' with ayse all mighty languages o' the world when they could barely gurgle a few sounds, sayin' the rest in the movement of their fingers.

Poges. [*Shouting in rage.*] Go to the devil, man, and learn manners!

Second Workman. [*Going on vehemently, but moving slowly to one of the entrances.*] Hammerin' out handsome golden ornaments for flowin' cloak an' tidy tunic we were, while you were busy gatherin' dhried grass, an' dyin' it blue, to hide the consternation of your middle parts; decoratin' eminent books with glowin' colour, an' audacious beauty were we, as O'Killigain, himself, will tell you, when you were still a hundred score o' years away from even hearin' of the alphabet. [*Beside the entrance.*] Fool? It's yourself's the fool, I'm sayin', settlin' down in a place that's only fit for the housin' o' dead men! Settin' here, are you? Wait till God sends the heavy rain, and the floods come! [*He goes out.*]

Poges. [*To SOUHAUN.*] There's Erin, the tear and the smile in her eye for you! The unmannerly ruffian! Cheeking me up to my very face. Venomous, too—wanting me to wait till the floods come!

Souhaun. Well, it's not a royal face, is it? You'll have to learn to be respectful to the people, if you want them to be respectful to you.

Poges. [*Sarcastically.*] I'll be most deferential in the future. [*Stormily—to FIRST WORKMAN appearing at the entrance.*] Well, what do you want?

First Workman. Excuse, but I sailed in, hearin' you were in a difficulty, an' I wanted to see if I could help.

Poges. Well, I want to know where's the man who is responsible for putting in this 'phone?

First Workman. Why, is there anything wrong with it, sir?

Poges. [*Stormily.*] Everything's wrong, man! I can't get on to the Exchange.

First Workman. Sure, that's aysily explained; it's not connected yet.

Poges. It was to be connected, first thing this morning. When will it be connected?

First Workman. [*Cautiously.*] Oh, now, that depends, sir.

Poges. Depends? Depends on what?

First Workman. On how long it'll take to

get the sthrame o' the sound from here flowin' safely to whatever other end there may be fixed for it to be heard in.

Poges. [*Impatiently.*] Get O'Killigain, get him to come here, at once.

First Workman. Sure, that's the post-master's job—Mr O'Killigain has nothing to do with it.

Poges. [*Shouting.*] Then get me the man that has something to do with it.

Souhaun. [*Who has been looking at the coloured curtain stuff, and spreading it out.*] Now, Cyril, see what you think: Is the red with the green stripe or the green with the red stripe the most suitable to go with the walls?

[The sound of horses trotting is heard outside, becoming plainer, till the sound ceases somewhere close to the house.]

Poges. [*To SOUHAUN—with irritation.*] For goodness' sake, one thing at a time. [*To FIRST WORKMAN.*] Go and get the man that's doing this job.

First Workman. I'm afraid you'll have to thravel a long way, if you want to get him, sir; you see, he had to go to pay his last respects to a dead cousin; but never fear, he won't be gone beyond a couple of hours, unless something out o' the ordinary keeps him away the whole o' the evenin'.

[POGES sinks down on one of the seats, silent and confounded.]

Cloyne. [*Appearing at back entrance.*] Th' horses are here, now, sir.

Poges. [*Sitting up.*] Horses? What horses?

Cloyne. The horses Mr Basil an' Miss Avril ordered to come here.

Souhaun. Basil and Avril are going out for a little canter, Cyril.

Poges. Canter! [*Mocking.*] A gentleman goes a trit-trot! [*Peevishly.*] But this is no time to be thinking of amusement; we have to get the house into shape. Ask O'Killigain to come here.

Souhaun. [*To CLOYNE.*] Yes, get O'Killigain, Cloyne; he has a good eye, and will be able to judge which of these curtain stuffs should go on the windows.

[CLOYNE goes. O'KILLIGAIN appears at the left entrance, with an anxious look on his face.]

O'Killigain. Who's going to ride these horses that are outside?

Souhaun. [*Haughtily.*] Miss Avril and her friend, Mr Basil Stoke, are going to ride them.

O'Killigain. I suppose you know these horses are mettlesome creatures, and need riders at home in the saddle?

Souhaun. [*More haughtily still.*] My friend and her friend learned the art in a London riding school and exercised frequently in Richmond Park; so your kind solicitude is unnecessary, sir.

O'Killigain. [*Viciously.*] Richmond Park isn't Clune na Geera, ma'am. The horses there are animals; the horses here are horses. [*AVRIL comes tripping in, dressed in jersey and jodhpurs, and is followed by BASIL, dressed in a dark green kind of hunting coat, buckskin breeches, and big gleaming top-boots, with spurs; he carries a whip in his hand, and a high, handsome, shining tall-hat on his head. With a frightened look at BASIL.*] Good God!

[He turns on his heel, and walks out again.]

Basil. [*With complacent conceit—to SOUHAUN.*] The old ways coming back again to the old house, Souhaun.

Souhaun. [*Rapturously.*] Isn't it grand, dear? Don't forget to go through the Village.

Avril. [*Joyously.*] Basil has been so kind, Souhaun, dear; he has given me a grand cheque.

Souhaun. [*Giving BASIL a kiss.*] Basil, you're a darling!

Poges. [*Grumpily.*] Be careful how you handle those horses.

Basil. [*Haughtily—to POGES.*] Did you say anything, sir?

Poges. [*With some heat.*] I said be careful how you handle those horses!

Basil. [*With a mocking bow.*] Thank you, sir; we'll do our best. [*To AVRIL.*] Come, darling.

[AVRIL trips out, and BASIL follows her in a way that he deems to be stately.]

Poges. I hope they'll do no damage, now.

Souhaun. Oh, never fear; Basil sits the saddle like a centaur.

[The movement of horses' hooves is heard, then a trot, getting fainter till it dies away.]

Poges. [*Exasperated.*] God send he doesn't frighten the horse—looking like the cock of the South. More decent of him had he remained here to get this telephone going. They all seem to be determined here to keep us away from every semblance of civilization! [*To SOUHAUN—stormily.*] Will you, for God's sake, try to get O'Killigain to do something to get this thing in order? [*He goes over to where SOUHAUN is busy with the curtains and pulls the curtains out of her hands, and flings them to the floor.*] D'ye hear, d'ye hear what I'm saying to you, woman?

Souhaun. [*Losing patience, and seizing him, and shaking him roughly.*] What d'ye

think you're doing, you old dim-eyed old half-dead old fool? I'll disconnect you as well as the telephone, if you don't learn to behave yourself! You settled on coming here, and you'll put up with the annoyances!

Poges. [*Protestingly.*] Eh, eh, there! It was you who persuaded me to come to this god-forsaken hole!

Souhaun. [*Shaking him more fiercely.*] You're a liar, I didn't! It was you yourself who were always pinin' to see the little squirrels jiggling about on the trees, and see the violets and primroses dreaming in the budding stir of spring! [*She pushes him violently from her.*] Another snarly sound out of you, and I'm off to live alone.

Poges. [*Gloomily.*] You can well afford to be independent now, since, like a fool, I settled five hundred a year on you.

[*During this contest, CLOYNE has appeared at the left entrance, and now gives a judicious cough.*]

Souhaun. [*Quickly—to cover dispute from CLOYNE.*] We'll decide on this stuff, then, for the curtains, Cyril, dear.

Poges. It'll look delightful, darling. [*Pre-tending to see CLOYNE for the first time.*] Oh, what do you want?

Cloyne. Canon Creechewel's outside, an' would like to have a few words with you, if you're not too busy.

Poges. [*Showing irritation.*] Oh, these priests! Thick as weeds in this poor country. Opposed to every decent thought that happens not to have come from them. Sealing with seven seals any book an intelligent human being would wish to read. Ever on guard to keep the people from growing out of infancy. No one should give them the slightest encouragement. Oh, if the misguided people would only go back to the veneration of the old Celtic gods, what a stir we'd have here! To the delightful, if legendary, loveliness of er, er, er,—what's his name, what's her name, what's their name? I have so often said it, so often in my mind, the chief, or one of the chief gods of the ancient Celts?

Souhaun. Was it Gog or Magog, dear?

Poges. [*With fierce scorn.*] Oh, no, no, no; try to think a little, if you really want to assist me. Can't you remember that Gog and Magog were two Philistinian giants killed by David, or Jonathan, or Joshua, or Joab, or Samson, or someone? It's the old Celtic god I have in mind, the one—what was his name?

Souhaun. Gulliver?

Poges. Oh, no; not Gulliver!

Souhaun. Well, I don't know the hell who it was.

Poges. [*Slapping his thigh exultantly.*] Broddingnag! That was the fellow—the fellow that ate the nine nuts—or was it seven?—plucked from the tree hanging over the well near the world's end.

Cloyne. What am I to say to the Canon, sir?

Poges. What does he want; did you ask him what he wants?

Cloyne. He says he just wants to drop a word of thanks for the fifty pounds you sent him.

[*A murmur of voices is heard outside. It comes nearer, and the sound seems excited.*]

Poges. [*Listening.*] What's that, now?

First Workman's Voice. [*Outside.*] Keep his head up.

Third Workman's Voice. [*Outside.*] You're home, sir, you're home, now.

[*They come in supporting BASIL by the arms, followed by the SECOND MAN, holding BASIL's coat-tail. BASIL is pale, and has a frightened look on his face. His lovely coat is spattered with mud, and, in some places, torn. The FIRST MAN is carrying the tall hat, now looking like a battered concertina.*]

Poges. [*Anxiously.*] What's this; what's happened?

First Workman. [*Soothingly.*] He's all right, sir; just a little shock. We seen him crawling towards the house, an' went to his help. His horse flung him.

Souhaun. [*Running to BASIL.*] Are you much hurt, Basil, dear?

Basil. [*Brokenly.*] Bruised, bruised from head to foot.

Poges. [*With irritation.*] Why, why the hell didn't you stay here and help me to get the telephone fixed?

Basil. Why didn't you hold me back by force? Oh, why did you let me go!

Souhaun. [*Anxiously.*] Where's Avril?

Basil. [*Ignoring her query.*] Oh, I should never have ventured up on an Irish horse! Irresponsible, irresponsible, like the people. When he wouldn't go, I gave him just a little jab with the spur— [*Moaningly.*] —and the brute behaved like a wild animal, just like a wild animal! A monster, a mastodon!

First Workman. [*Soothingly—to SOUHAUN.*] He's not hurt much, ma'am; came down in th' grass on his poor bum.

Souhaun. But where's Avril? [*Shaking BASIL's shoulder.*] Where's Avril?

Basil. Gone!

Souhaun. Gone?

Basil. Away with O'Killigain. He came

bounding up to help Avril, and abused me for falling off. Then they cantered away together. [*Loudly and a little shrilly.*] Naked and unashamed, the vixen went away with O'Killigain!

[*A hole appears in the ceiling, almost directly over the fireplace; then a thin rope comes dangling down, followed by the face of a heavily YELLOW-BEARDED MAN, who thrusts his head as far as it can go through the hole.*]

Yellow-Bearded Man. [*To those below.*] Hey, hey, there; is this where yous want the light to go?

Poges. [*With a vexatious yell when he sees where the rope hangs.*] No, it isn't, no, it isn't, you fool! [*Indicating a place near the centre and towards the back.*] There, there's where it's wanted! Where my desk will be!

Yellow-Bearded Man. [*Soothingly.*] Don't worry; just a little mistake in measurement, sir.

[*He takes his head out of the hole, and disappears, leaving POGES furious.*]

Souhaun. [*To POGES.*] Here, help me in with poor Basil, till he drinks some brandy, and lies down for a little.

[*POGES takes one arm, SOUHAUN takes the other, and they lead BASIL out of the room.*]

Cloyne. [*As they pass.*] What am I to do with the Canon, sir?

Poges. [*Ferociously.*] Tell him I'll give him another cheque, if he gets the telephone fixed for me before the night is out!

[*BASIL, SOUHAUN, and POGES go out by the left entrance; CLOYNE by that on the right, leaving the MEN standing together in a corner of the room.*]

Second Workman. [*Pensively.*] Th' spirit

of the Grey o' Macha's in our Irish horse yet!

First Workman. [*Excitedly.*] Did yous hear that, eh? Did yous hear what he just let dhrop? That the lassie o' th' house went off with O'Killigain riding naked through the locality!

Second Workman. Stark naked, she was, too. Didn't I know well be th' cut of her jib that she was a hop, step, an' lep of a lassie!

First Workman. Th' sight near left me eyes when I seen her go prancin' out without as much as a garter on her to keep her modesty from catchin' cold.

Third Workman. This'll denude the district of all its self-denyin' decency.

First Workman. [*Excitedly jumping up on a seat to get nearer to the hole in the ceiling.*] Cornelius, eh, there, Cornelius!

[*The YELLOW-BEARDED HEAD is thrust through the hole again.*]

Yellow-Bearded Man. What's up?

First Workman. Didja hear th' terrible thing that's afther happenin'?

Yellow-Bearded Man. No; what terrible thing?

First Workman. The lassie o' th' house's gone careerin' all over th' counthry on horse-back with only her skin as a coverin'!

Yellow-Bearded Man. [*Horrifed.*] G'way! No, no; oh, no!

Third Workman. [*Up to him.*] Oh, but, oh yes. I'm tellin' you. An' th' poor men workin' in th' fields had to flee to th' ditches to save th' sight of their eyes from th' shock o' seein' her!

Yellow-Bearded Man. [*With aggravated anguish in his voice.*] It's like me to be up here outa sight o' the world with great things happenin'!

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE: *The same as in the preceding act.*

The two portraits, one of STOKE, the other of POGES, are now hanging on the wall at back, between the windows. Bright green curtains, broadly striped with red, are on the windows. A Jacobean armchair has been added to the two stiff pew-like seats beside the fireplace. The table is to the left, so that two mattresses, one beside the other, can be seen, with their heads against the

wall and their feet towards the front. On these, wrapped round with rugs and blankets, are POGES and STOKE. Some thick rolled-up floor rugs are lying against the wall. A bunch of pampas grass is in the earthenware jug standing on the table. The rejected crimson curtain stuff is lying over one of the pew-like seats. A walking-stick—BASIL'S—is leaning against the wall, near to where he is lying.

It is about half-past seven on a cold and misty morning. A few misty beams of sunlight are coming in through the windows, paling the light of a lighted lantern standing between the two beds.

[The two men are twisting about uneasily on the mattresses; when POGES twists to the right, BASIL twists to the left, and vice versa. Then POGES, wearing a blue beret, with a black bow at the side, lifts his head a little, and glances over at BASIL. He is in that drowsy state felt by a man who has spent long hours of the night trying to get to sleep, and failing to do so.

Before the scene is disclosed, the hooting of owls is heard, first; then the faint lowing of cattle, grunting of swine, crowing of cocks, bleating of sheep; then, vigorously from various directions, the whistling of the chorus of "The Farmer's Boy."]

POGES. Did you hear that cock crowing? *[Imitating.]* Cockadoodle doo! And that cuckoo calling? *[He imitates the bird.]* Cuckoo! Cuckoo!

BASIL. Deafening, aren't they? And the owls too! *[Imitating them.]* Too whit, too whit! All the night, jungle noises!

POGES. Good God, isn't it cold? *[BASIL is silent.]* Eh, how d'ya feel now?

BASIL. *[With a faint groan.]* Stiff as hell still! It's a mercy I'm alive. And, on the top of it, Avril to make a laughing-stock of me by enjoying herself with O'Killigain.

POGES. *[Sympathetically.]* It was damned mean of her, Basil. She's inclined that way, I'm afraid. You'll have to keep a strong hand over her, my boy.

BASIL. *[With a deep groan.]* I can't—now.

POGES. Why can't you, man?

BASIL. A month before we came here, I did a very foolish thing.

POGES. Oh?

BASIL. *[Mournfully.]* Settled five hundred a year on her for life.

POGES. Oh! *[A fairly long pause.]* Basil, Basil, I did the same to Souhaun!

BASIL. We're done for, Cyril.

POGES. *[In a sprightly way.]* No, no; a month in the country'll make us young again. We'll be as lively as goats, in no time. Besides, we can always cautiously hint at an increase in the settlement.

BASIL. *[Gloomily.]* With the workers always striking for higher wages, it'll have to remain a hint.

POGES. *[As gloomily.]* It's damnable,

Basil. If much more is given to them, how's a poor man to live? *[He sinks back on the mattress, and pulls the clothes over his head. Outside a cock crows loudly, followed by the call of a cuckoo. Clicking his tongue, exasperatedly—from under the clothes.]* Ditch ditch ditch! Isn't it a good thing those birds aren't in the house! *[The cock crows again, much louder this time, and the cuckoo calls again.]* Damn that cock and that cuckoo! Did you hear that cock crowing, Basil, and the cuckoo?

BASIL. Deafening, isn't it? And the owls, too, all the night.

POGES. The country's not going to be so quiet as I thought. Still, I'm glad we came.

BASIL. So am I, really. These sounds are just part of the country's attractions—pleasant and homely.

POGES. And stimulating, Basil, stimulating. Look at the sunlight coming in through the windows—another dawn, Basil; another life. Every day in the country brings another chance of living a new life.

BASIL. *[Enthusiastically.]* And we're going to live it, eh, what, Cyril?

POGES. *[Enthusiastically.]* Oh, boy, ay!

[SOUHAUN appears at the back entrance, left, and AVRIL at entrance to the right. Both are wearing fur coats over their nightdresses and shiver a little.]

Souhaun. *[Plaintively.]* For goodness' sake, will you two men get up, and do something? Cloyne's fallen down in a dark passage and hurt her wrist, and she can't do much.

POGES. Oh?

Avril. And something will have to be done to heat the rooms—we were almost frozen last night.

POGES. Ah! Well, we weren't scorched with the heat either.

Souhaun. Well, stir yourselves, and you'll soon get warm. O'Killigain and his men are already at work, and will want to be coming in and out of here.

[The cock crows louder than ever, and is joined by many more, a few of them at a great distance, so that the sounds are heard but faintly; these are mingled with the barking of dogs, the lowing of cattle, the bleating of sheep, the twittering of birds, the grunting of pigs, and the cackling of hens.]

Avril. There, you hear; everything's alive but you two.

POGES. Well, we'll be in the midst of them all in a second. *[The two WOMEN withdraw. BASIL and POGES, with the clothes wrapped round them, sit up, and dive down again.]*

After a second or two, they sit bolt upright again, and again dive down. Shivering.]

Ooooh, Basil, cold!

Basil. [*Shivering.*] Bitter, bitter!

[*They lie quiet for a short time.*]

Poges. There's nothing for it but to plunge out of the summer into the black and bitter winter.

Basil. You say the word.

Poges. Ready! Steady! Go! [*They climb laboriously out of the beds. When they get out, it can be seen that they have been fully dressed, even to their heavy topcoats and scarves wound round their necks. Blowing on his hands and rubbing them.*] Ooooh, crisp, isn't it? Healthy, though. Ooooh! Where the hell's that Barney, that he hasn't a fire lighted for us? Ooooh! One would want to be on his tail all day. [*Shouting.*] Barney, Barney! [*BARNEY comes in holding some logs in the crook of his right arm, and a lantern in his left hand. CLOYNE follows, with some paper and sticks. Her left wrist is bandaged. BARNEY is wearing a topcoat, and has a muffler round his neck. CLOYNE, too, is wearing a heavy coat. They both go over to the fireplace. As they come in.*] Ah, here we are. Bit nippy, Barney; sharp, but beneficial. [*To CLOYNE.*] You'll have to be more careful with the steps and passages. Mind your feet coming in, mind your head going out. Ooooh! [*To BASIL.*] You better slip off and give the others any help you can. [*As BASIL is going.*] What about your walking-stick?

Basil. [*Moving stiffly.*] I must try to do without it—about the house, anyway.

[*He takes the lantern that is beside his bed, and goes out.*]

Poges. [*To the other two.*] Well, what do the pair of you think of the country, eh? And the house? Better than any your old Kings of Tarara had, eh?

Cloyne. [*Effusively.*] I'm sure it'll be lovely, sir, when we settle down.

[*POGES has been jerking his arms about in an effort to drive the cold from his body. CLOYNE begins to fold the clothes on the beds, and tidy them up.*]

Poges. Of course it will. We'll enjoy it all; we'll feel younger; we will be younger. The air, fresh air, pure air, exhilarating air, will be able to get at us. [*He sucks in his breath and blows it out again.*] Oooh! Soon we won't know ourselves. We'll eat better, sleep better; flabby muscles will become firm, and we'll realize that we are alive, alive, alive— Think of the walks we'll have; so much to see, so much to hear, so much to smell; and then to come back, nicely tired,

to such a lovely house. A life for the gods! Cloyne. Wondherful, wondherful, sir.

Poges. Now, I must be off to swallow down a cup of tea, for there's a lot to be done, a lot to be done yet.

[*He hurries off out of the room.*]

Cloyne. The poor oul' codger!

Barney. Comin' down to this back o' God-speed place for rest an' quietness! After all that science has thried to do for us, goin' back to lanterns an' candles. Th' only electric light he'll allow in a Tudor house is one over his own desk! Runnin' in the face o' God Almighty's goodness—that's what it is.

Cloyne. They'll get tired of it before us.

Barney. I can tell you I'm tired of it already. Looka the place we're livin' in: doors everywhere shaped like doors o' dungeons; passages dark as hell when it was first formed; crackin' your head when you're goin' in, and breakin' your toe when you're goin' out; an' I'm tellin' you, it's only beginnin'.

Cloyne. It might be worse.

Barney. [*Striking a match to light the paper.*] We're goin' to be worse, I'm tellin' you.

Cloyne. We can't be worse than we are.

Barney. [*As the flames of the paper die down.*] There's no chance o' kindlin' here. Why did you say, then, that we might be worse?

Cloyne. Well, so, indeed an' we might.

Barney. How can we be worse, woman, when we're as bad as we can be?

Cloyne. Simply by bein' worse than we were.

Barney. How can we be worse than we were, when we're as bad as we can be, now?

Cloyne. You'll see we'll be worse, before we're better.

Barney. Damn these logs! Isn't that what I'm sthrivin' to dhrive into your head?

Cloyne. What are you sthrivin' to dhrive into me head?

Barney. That we'll be worse than we were, before we're as bad as we are now, an' in a week's time we'll be lookin' back with a sigh to a time, bad as it could be then, that was better than the worse that was on top of us now.

[*POGES bustles in again. The heavy topcoat is gone, and he is now dressed in bright-blue shorts, emerald-green jersey, brown shoes, and the scarf is still round his neck. He has a cup of tea in his hand and he is sipping it as he comes into the room. He is miserably cold, but he puts on a brisk air, sorting it out*

in his mind that to be cold in the country is natural, to be ignored as far as possible, and to be countered by a smiling face, a brisk manner, and the wearing of brilliant clothes denoting freedom of movement and utter disregard of the common rules of convention. He is feeling far from comfortable, but thinks this shouldn't be shown; for the colder you are, and the more uncomfortable you feel, the brisker you must be, and the harder you'll get.]

Poges. Here we are again! Ready for anything now. [*Losing his gay attitude when he sees that the fire isn't lighted.*] Isn't the fire lighted yet? What are you doing, Barney? Be'ing in the country's no reason why we should be frozen to death.

Barney. I can't get a spark out of it, afther all me thrivin'.

Poges. [*Testily.*] You can't light logs with a bit of paper, man. Oh, use your brains, Barney, use your brains.

Barney. An' what else have I got to light them?

Poges. Small sticks, man; put some small sticks under them.

Barney. An' will you tell me where I'm goin' to get the small sticks? Where am I goin' to get small sticks? Isn't the nearest shop a dozen miles away?

Poges. Well, if there's no sticks, sprinkle a little paraffin on them.

Barney. An' where am I goin' to get the paraffin? An' where am I goin' to get the paraffin? There's no oil wells knockin' about here.

Poges. [*Severely.*] Don't be funny. You've got to remember you're in the country now.

Barney. Isn't it meself that's gettin' to know it well!

Poges. We've got to do things for ourselves: there's no chance of pushing a button to get things done here.

Barney. Sure, I'm beginnin' to think you're right.

Poges. Can't you see that those logs are too big?

Barney. I think I do, unless me sight's goin' curious.

Poges. [*Hotly.*] Well, then, why don't you do it?

Barney. Arra, do what?

Poges. [*Loudly.*] Make them smaller, man!

Barney. [*Calmly and sarcastically.*] An' how?

Poges. And how? Why, with an axe, of course. [*Bending down close to BARNEY'S*

ear—with a shout.] An axe, man, an axe!

Barney. [*Losing his temper—shouting back.*] An' where's the axe, an' where's the axe?

Poges. There must be an axe knocking about somewhere.

Barney. There's nothin' knockin' about here, but a bither breeze whirlin' through the passages that ud numb the legs of a Mother Superior.

Cloyne. [*Trying to mollify things.*] Sure, the poor man's back-broken an' heart-broken thryin' to kindle it, sir.

Poges. [*Who has been waving his arms and stamping his feet while his teeth chatter—turning fiercely on CLOYNE.*] You mind your own business, girl! [*Seeing her putting the mattress by the wall.*] Have we got to sleep down here again tonight?

Cloyne. Ay, an' yous have. Th' other rooms are too damp still. Sure, Mr O'Killigain says that it'll take a month of fierce fires to dhry them out.

Poges. [*Testily.*] Mr O'Killigain says this, and Mr O'Killigain says that! I'm getting tired of what Mr O'Killigain says. If we have to sleep here, you or Barney'll have to stay up all night keeping the fire going, or we'll be frozen in our sleep. [*His eye catches sight of the telephone. He goes over to it, and lifts the receiver.*] Not a sound! No, oh no; not a bit of a hurry. [*Angrily, to CLOYNE.*] Go out, girl, and send in the boy who's working at this telephone. [*With a low moan.*] Ireland!

[*CLOYNE goes out by the doorway on the right leading to entrance hall. After a few seconds the loud lowing of a cow is heard, followed by a scream from CLOYNE, who rushes frantically back into the room, pale and trembling.*]

Cloyne. [*Breathlessly rushing back into the room, falling on the floor, and catching POGES wildly by the legs.*] Save me! Stuck his head into me face, th' minute I opened the door. Mother o' God, F'll never see th' light of another day with th' fright I got!

Poges. [*Alarmed.*] What is it, what is it, woman?

Cloyne. [*Almost incoherent.*] A bull, a wild bull, out in th' entrance hall!

Barney. [*Frantically.*] A wild bull! We're all destroyed!

Poges. [*Trying to release himself from CLOYNE'S hold.*] Let me go, girl! Let me go, or I can't defend myself. If he comes in here the whole of us'll be horned.

Cloyne. [*Frantically.*] Me legs have given undher me. Let me hold on to you, sir—it's me only hope!

Poges. [To BARNEY.] Put the table to the doorway, man, and a mattress, and help to bar him out—quick, quick, man! [To CLOYNE, while BARNEY is pushing the table and a mattress to the door.] Why didn't you clap the door in his face, you fool?

Cloyne. Wasn't he half into the hall before I'd the door half open! Oh, sir, what are we goin' to do? Oh, please go, sir, an' thry an' shove him out!

Poges. [Half dead with panic.] My God, woman, you can't shove bullocks about! [Shouting.] Souhaun, there's a wild bull in the house! Help, O'Killigain, help! [To BARNEY.] Run, run, man, and get Mr Stoke to bring down the gun. Oh, go quick, man! [BARNEY runs off. Shouting.] O'Killigain, help! Can't you let me go, girl?

Cloyne. [Still clinging to him.] Carry me off, sir, please. Don't leave me here to die alone! Maybe he won't be able to climb the stairs after us. Oh, when I came to th' country, I never thought there'd be wild animals on th' door-step!

[BASIL appears at one of the entrances at the back; he moves forward stealthily, and extends a gun to POGES.]

Basil. [Nervous.] What is it, what is it?

Poges. A bull, out in the hall.

Basil. Who let him? Damn it, such carelessness! You must be on guard in the country, you know. Here, take the gun, man.

Poges. [Angrily—to BASIL.] Come out, come out in the open, man, and be ready to use the gun, if he comes into the room! [Shoving the gun from him.] You use it, man; weren't you an A. R. P.¹ man?

Basil. [Indignantly.] I never did anything more than clay-pigeon shooting! Let whoever let the damned animal in let the damned animal out! [He pokes POGES with the gun.] Here, take this, and down him—you're nearer the bull than I am.

Poges. [Angrily.] I'm not a toreador, am I? And don't point, don't point the gun at me! D'ye want me to die two deaths at once? What's the advantage of your passing through Oxford, if you can't face a bull with a gun in your hand? Be a man, man, and not a mouse.

Basil. [Keeping well in the passage, and only showing his nose.] Telephone the police, the fire brigade, or something.

Poges. [Violently.] Don't you know the kind of a country we're in? There's no police, no fire brigade, no telephone! Come here, if you won't use the gun, and help me carry this girl away out of danger.

[The BULL puts a stylised head with long curving horns over the barricade and lets out a loud bellow. CLOYNE spasmodically tugs the legs of POGES, making him lose his balance so that he topples to the floor, after a frantic effort to save himself.]

Cloyne. Oooh, sir, save me!

Poges. [With a wild shout as he is falling.] My God, he's on top of us! We're done for! Help!

[BASIL throws the gun into the room, and runs for his life.]

Barney. [In the far distance.] Sing out, sir, if you want any assistance!

[Someone is heard stirring outside where the animal is; this stir is followed by the voice of the FIRST WORKMAN shooting the cow out of the hall. After a few moments, POGES slowly sits up and listens.]

First Workman. [Shouting outside.] Eh, oick, oick, eh, yeh get; ay, ay oick oick!

[POGES gets up on his feet, shaking a little, and going over, picks up the gun, and steadying himself on it, stands over the prostrate CLOYNE, who is almost in a faint, bundled up on the floor, with her face hidden in her hands. Shortly after, the FIRST WORKMAN appears at the entrance, with a bucket of coal and some sticks. He looks over the table, astonished to see the prostrate CLOYNE and POGES standing near, with a gun in his hand.]

Poges. [Stormily.] Where the hell did that bull come from? Who owns her? Who let that bull come tearing into a private house?

First Workman. Bull, sir? Oh, that wasn't a bull, sir. [He pushes the table back to its place.] Jest a harmless, innocent cow, sir. Frightened the poor girl, now, did it? [Cunningly.] But I see it didn't frighten you, sir.

Poges. [Flattered.] No, no, not me. [To CLOYNE.] Here, girl, get up on your feet. [Loudly.] It wasn't a bull; I knew it couldn't be a bull! and it's gone, so get up. [With the help of the FIRST WORKMAN and POGES, CLOYNE gets up on her feet.] There now, be off with you. Get Miss Avril to give you a stiff glass of whiskey, and you'll be all right. And bring this gun back to Mr Basil.

[He picks up the gun, and hands it to the shaking CLOYNE.]

Cloyne. Oh, sir, this place is worse than a jungle in th' desert!

Poges. Go on, go on! I thought you Irish were a brave people.

¹ Air Raid Precautions.

[*He is shaky himself, but he stiffens himself to conceal the tremors.*]

Cloyne. [*Going out with the gun.*] For ages now, it's bulls I'll be dhreamin' of, an' there's ne'er a lock on me door either!

Poges. Fainting, shouting, screaming, and running about for nothing! No nerves, no nerves, no spirit; no coolness in a crisis.

First Workman. [*Craftily.*] An' did they all think it was a bull, sir? An' you stood your ground. Looka that now; prepared for anything, sir.

Poges. [*Taking it all in.*] The other fellow, Mr Basil, ran for his life; think of that—ran for his life!

First Workman. Did he, now?

Poges. British, too, think of that; surprising and disappointing, very. [*Briskly and a little anxiously.*] Still, I must acquaint the police. I can't have cows or bulls wandering about the rooms of Tudor Manor.

First Workman. [*Who has started to light the fire.*] One o' th' ladies sent me in to light a fire for you. [*Placatingly.*] Sure, sir, she was only the cow me friend brought this mornin' so that, when you had a minute, you could run out an' look her over. A fine animal, sir. She got loose an' wandhered in when she found the door open. She's better than th' best that was in th' cattle raid o' Cooley.

[*Souhaun comes running in from the back entrance, hurriedly and somewhat alarmed.*]

Souhaun. What on earth's all this commotion about a bull? We had to stop Basil from throwing himself out of a window. And Barney climbed out on the roof! What does it mean?

Poges. [*Nonchalantly.*] Oh, nothing at all. A stray cow got into the garden, and Basil lost his head and Cloyne lost her feet. Nerry!

Souhaun. But Barney when he was rushing past said that you were roaring for help.

First Workman. [*Gayly.*] Roarin' for help, is it? Indeed, an' he wasn't, for I can testify to that, miss, but standing here, he was, on me Bible oath, miss, cool as you like, waitin' for the rush of th' angry animal.

Souhaun. But I'm certain I heard him roaring myself.

First Workman. That was only him, miss, dhrivin' the wild animal out.

Souhaun. You'll have to learn to keep bulls in proper places—we can't have them running round the rooms. [*To POGES—throwing the overall to him.*] There's your overall to wear when you're working. [*To WORKMAN.*] And no more bulls.

First Workman. No, miss; no more bulls. Poges. We'll deal with them when they come; we'll deal with them.

[*During the discussion, the WORKMAN has been attending to the fire, and POGES goes over to it as SOUHAUN goes out.*]

First Workman. [*To POGES as he warms his hands at the fire.*] There y're, sir: a fire that'll warm y'up an' make your mind easy.

Poges. Good, great, grand! Are you the workman who knows all the stories and legends of Ireland since the world began?

First Workman. No, no, not me, sir; it's Philip you mean—the powerful man with th' powerful beard. [*Touching his forehead.*] Some say he isn't all there, but a wonderherful man, ay, indeed, is Philip. Does a man good to talk to him.

Poges. I'll have a chat with him, the first chance I get.

First Workman. [*Looking around the room with a ravishing air.*] This is a wonderherful house, so it is. It's an honour to be workin' in it. Afther hundreds o' years standin' in frost, rain, an' snow, frontin' th' winds o' the world, it's a marvel it isn't flat on its face, furnishin' only an odd shelther for a stray fox; but here it stands, an' we all waitin' for a windy winther ud stagger it an' send it tottherin' down.

Poges. [*Indignantly.*] Tottherin' down! What d'ye mean, tottherin' down? The place is as firm as a lighthouse. Tottherin' down, indeed!

First Workman. [*Repelling the idea that he thought of such a thing.*] Tottherin' down, is it? Now, who, in th' name o' God, save a sure an' safe fool, ud think it was tottherin' down? Not me, now; oh no, not me. Tottherin' down, me neck! Isn't the grand oul' house goin' to show, soon an' sudden, a sign of what a fine residence it was when the quality harnessed their horses for a hunt be the risin' rim o' th' dawn or sat down in their silks an' satins to their evenin' meal, in the shadowy shine o' th' golden candles!

Poges. Purple nights and golden days, my friend. [*He sighs.*] Aah!

First Workman. [*With a long, deep, imitative sigh.*] Aah! We'll never set eyes on the like o' them again, sir; th' sparklin' carriages comin' an' goin', th' steeds throttin' nicely an' neatly, or movin' at a gallop, always elegant, on a visit to me lord here, or me lady there, with th' sky above in a fair swoon o' pride for th' fine things movin' about below; an' they full o' grace, an'

decked out in the grandeur o' th' West Indies an' th' East Indies, sobered down a thrifle for use in a Christian counthry, the women's bosoms asway with jewels, like a tendher evenin' sky, alive with stars. An' the gentlemen, just a dim step down, but elegant too, in finery fair, with ruffles an' lace, with cutaway coats an' vests embroidered, each holdin' a cane to keep them steady, an' all halo'd with scents to ring them round from th' smell o' th' poor an' dingier world at work or play!

Poges. [*Enthusiastically.*] Those were handsome days. [*He fixes a plume of pampas grass in his beret.*] When shall we look upon their like again? [*He folds the crimson curtain stuff round him as if it were a cavalier's cloak.*] The lawns and rampart still are here, and we shall be the men! [*He snatches up BASIL's walking-stick.*] The plume in the hat, the velvet cloak over the shoulder, the tapering rapier in the hand! [*He makes a vicious lunge at the FIRST WORKMAN who narrowly dodges the pass.*] Die, varlet!

First Workman. [*Remonstratively.*] Eh, eh, there; careful, sir, be careful!

Poges. [*Leaning on the stick as if it were a sword—sorrowfully.*] Where are the kings and queens and warriors now? Gone with all their glory! The present day and present men? Paltry, mean, tight and tedious. [*Disgustedly.*] Bah!

First Workman. What are we now, what are we all, but a tired thribe thryin' to do nothin' in the shortest possible time: worn away we are, I'm sayin', to shreds and shaddas, moun'tin' machines to do everything for us. Tired, is it? Ay, tired an' thremblin' towards th' edge of th' end of a life hardly worth livin'!

Poges. [*Gloomily pacing up and down.*] Not worth living, not worth living.

First Workman. [*With greater energy.*] Time ago, an' we gave a ready ear to one speakin' his faith in God an' his neighbour; but now, there's so many gabbers goin' that there's hardly a listener left. Sure, that, in itself, is as sharp a punishment as a lease o' hell for a long vacation. It's meself is sayin' ourselves came late, but soon enough to see the finery fade to purple dust, an' the glow o' th' quality turn to murmurin' ashes.

Poges. [*Striking the attitude of a clumsy cavalier.*] We won't let them perish completely! We'll keep the stern old walls standin'. We'll walk where they walked; sit where they sat; and sleep where they slept!

First Workman. An' talk as they talked, too.

Poges. [*Wildly.*] Our pride shall be their

pride; our elegance their elegance, and the banner of the Tudors shall fly from the battlements again! The King, the King, God bless him!

First Workman. I wouldn't say too much about the King, sir; we're a little touchy about Kings in Clune na Geera.

[*SOUHAUN comes in again from entrance with a look of alarmed indignation on her face.*]

Souhaun. Who on earth thought of bringing a gun into this peaceful place?

Poges. [*Testily.*] I did, I did! Peaceful place! You can never tell what might be knocking about at night, and we have to be ready.

Souhaun. Well, let some take charge of it who knows how to use it, and not Basil.

Poges. Basil. What's that fermented fool doing with it?

Souhaun. He says you never know what may be knocking about at night and he ought to get used to it so's to be ready.

Poges. [*Furiously.*] And what could be knocking about here at night, woman! He's a nice lad to shoot wild animals! He'll send a bullet full-speed through somebody, if it isn't taken from him. [*To FIRST WORKMAN.*] Go you, and take it from him.

First Workman. [*Stricken.*] Me, sir? Me, sir, an' have the weapon goin' off bang with th' muzzle less'n' half an inch from me belly or me brain!

Poges. [*Furiously.*] You don't expect me to do it, do you? Go on, then, and get Miss Avril to take it from him! Go on, get Miss Avril to do it!

[*He pushes the FIRST WORKMAN impatiently out of the room. CLOYNE appears at entrance at back with a troubled look on her face.*]

Cloyne. Here, they've gone and dumped the garden tools an' the roller right in front of the hall door! And the roller's so close that when you want to go out or come in, you have to climb over it.

Poges. Tell whoever brought them to bring them to the back, and put them in the shed, fool!

Cloyne. How can I tell him when him an' the lorry's gone?

Poges. [*Furiously.*] And why didn't you tell him before he went?

Cloyne. An' didn't I now? He just said that the back was threnched be the workmen, an' he hadn't time to build pontoon bridges.

Poges. What a country! What a people! [*Viciously, to SOUHAUN.*] And you encourage them, because you and your friends are Irish, too!

Souhaun. If you ask me, you're not such a shining paragon of goodness yourself.

Poges. [*Explosively.*] I believe in efficiency! I demand efficiency from myself, from everyone. Do the thing thoroughly and do it well: that's English. The word given, and the word kept: that's English. [*Roaring.*] And I'm an Englishman!

Souhaun. You are, indeed, God help you!

Cloyne. An' what are we goin' to do about the garden tools an' th' roller?

Souhaun. [*In a bustling and dominant way, catching up the jazz-patterned overall and putting it on POGES.*] Here, if we waste any more time talking, the house will never be ready to live in. Put this on, and go and bring the roller from the front door through here, out of the way to the back. When you've done that, bring the garden tools to the back, too, and let us see your grand English efficiency at work while I and Avril do some of the hundred things remaining to be done.

[*She gives him a push from her, and hurries away out by one of the back entrances.*]

Cloyne. [*Warningly.*] It seems a heavy roller, sir, so mind you don't sthrain yourself when you're pullin' it.

Poges. [*Testily.*] Go away, go away, girl; I'm not an invalid. [*CLOYNE goes. POGES moves over to the blazing fire, and stretches out his hands to the flame. The SECOND WORKMAN comes in by left entrance at back, wheeling a barrow filled with bricks. He is a powerful man, of fifty, with gleaming eyes and wide and strong beard. As he comes nearer, POGES turns to give him greeting. Warmly.*] Good day, good sir; it's a cold day that's in it, surely.

Second Workman. [*Eyeing POGES curiously.*] Ay, is it, for them who has to brave it, an' can't stand all day in front of a sturdy fire like a kingly Pharaoh.

Poges. [*A little nonplussed.*] Quite, yes, yes, quite. Everyone tells me the place round here is a rich storehouse of history, legend, and myth.

Second Workman. [*With a little scorn in his voice.*] It's a little they know an' little they care about those things. But the place has her share o' history an' her share o' wondhers.

Poges. [*Flatteringly.*] And I'm told, you have a rare stock of them yourself.

Second Workman. Ay, indeed, I have me share o' wondhers, new an' old.

Poges. [*Trying to be Irish.*] Looka that, now, arra, whist, an' amnt I told it's strange stories you do be tellin' of the noble things

done by your fathers in their days, and in the old time before them?

Second Workman. [*Sinking into a meditative mood.*] When less than a score of the Fianna brought back the King of England prisoner, invaded Hindostan, an' fixed as subjects the men of all counthries between our Bay o' Dublin and the Holy river that gave to holy John the holy water to baptise our Lord.

Poges. [*Astonished.*] I never heard that one before.

Second Workman. [*With murmuring scorn.*] And where would th' like o' you hear it, man? That was in the days o' Finn Mac Coole, before his hair was scarred with a hint o' grey; the mighty Finn, I'm sayin', who stood as still as a stone in the heart of a hill to hear the cry of a curlew over th' cliffs o' Erris, the song of the blackbird, the cry o' the hounds hotfoot afther a boundin' deer, the steady wail o' the waves tumblin' in on a lonely shore; the mighty Finn who'd surrender an emperor's pomp for a place with the bards, and the gold o' the king o' Greece for a night asleep be the sthream of Assaroe!

Poges. [*Solemnly.*] A great man, a great man, surely; a great man gone forever.

Second Workman. [*Sharply.*] He's here forever! His halloo can be heard on the hills outside; his spear can be seen with its point in the stars; but not with an eye that can't see over the well-fashioned edge of a golden coin.

Poges. [*Moving back a step—a little awed.*] You see these things, do you?

Second Workman. I hear strange things be day, an' see strange things be night when I'm touched be the feel of the touch of the long-handed Lugh. When the Dagda makes a gong o' the moon, an' th' Sword o' Light shows the way to all who see it.

Poges. Aah!

Second Workman. Then every rib o' grass grows into a burnished fighter that throws his spear, or waves a sword, an' flings a shield before him. Then Ireland crinkles into a camp, an' kings an' sages, queens an' heroes, saints an' harpers stare me in the face, an' bow, an' pass, an' cry out blessing an' vict'ry, too, for Heber's children, with the branch of greatness waving in their hands!

Poges. And there it ends!

Second Workman. [*Giving POGES a drowsy glance.*] I'm thinkin' it might have been well for some if the end an' all was there; but it sthretches out to the sight of a big dim ship with a followin' fleet in the great dim distance, with a stern-fac'd man

in the blue-gold coat of the French Armee, standin' alone on the bridge of the big dim ship, his eyes fixed fast on the shore that was fallin' undher the high-headed, rough-tumblin' waves o' the sea!

Poges. [*Awed into interest—murmuringly.*] A big dim ship and a following fleet, carrying a man in the blue-gold coat of the French Armee—who was he, and when was that now?

Second Workman. Yestherday.

Poges. Yesterday!

Second Workman. The man was there, but the fleet was a golden dream, always comin' in an' ever goin' out o' th' Bay o' Banthry!

[O'KILLIGAIN has come in at the commencement of the SECOND WORKMAN'S musing, unnoticed by the dreaming worker, and barely noticed by the interested POGES, listening intently to what is being said, and a little awed by the influence of the SECOND WORKMAN. O'KILLIGAIN comes softly over, and stands a little behind, but close to the dreaming WORKMAN.]

Poges. [*Bending towards the SECOND WORKMAN.*] And who was the man in the blue-gold coat of the French Armee?

Second Workman. He was a great Irish soldier and a great Irish friend to the people of no property in Ireland.

O'Killigain. [*Very softly.*] And there are others.

Second Workman. [*Softly, too, but not so softly.*] And there are others; for through the roads of the four green fields goes Shane the Proud, with his fine head hidden, waving away his more venturesome friends from the horns of a bull, the hoofs of a horse, the snarl of a dog, an' th' smile of an Englishman.

Poges. [*Going back a step.*] The smile of an Englishman!

Second Workman. [*Unheeding the interruption.*] An' in the midst of them all, is Parnell standing still; unheeding he stands with a hand on his breast, his white face is fixed on the East, with his wine-coloured eyes flashin' hathred to England!

O'Killigain. [*Very softly.*] And there are others.

Second Workman. [*With a glance at O'KILLIGAIN.*] They came later, an' haven't wandhered fully back to where they cleared a way for a gropin' people, but they will come, an' stare us into the will to take our own again.

Poges. [*Detaching himself from the spell.*]

And do none other of those you know, good man, see the things that you see?

Second Workman. Barrin' a few an' O'Killigain there, they see these things only as a little cloud o' purple dust blown before the wind.

Poges. That's very sad.

Second Workman. Barrin' O'Killigain, there, an' a few, what is it all now but a bitter noise of cadgin' mercy from heaven, an' a sour handlin' o' life for a cushion'd seat in a corner? There is no shout in it; no sound of a slap of a spear in a body; no song; no sturdy wine-cup in a sturdy hand; no liftin' of a mighty arm to push back the tumblin' waters from a ship just shtrikin' a storm. Them that fight now, fight in a daze o' thradin'; for buyin' an' sellin' for whores an' holiness; for the image o' God on a golden coin; while th' men o' peace are little men, now, writin' dead words with their tiny pens, seekin' a tidy an' tendher way to the end. Respectable lodgers with life they are, behind solid doors with knockers on them, an' curtained glass to keep the stars from starin'!

[*The SECOND WORKMAN stoops, lifts the shafts of the barrow, and is about to go out.*]

Poges. [*To SECOND WORKMAN—placatingly.*] My own great-grandfather was Irish, I'm told, and my grandmother was a kind of a Scotswoman.

Second Workman. [*Going out, with the barrow, slowly.*] That's not such a lot, an' you're not sure of any of it, either.

Poges. What a strange, odd man! I couldn't get half of what he was trying to say. Are there many like him?

O'Killigain. Millions of them, though few of them have tongues so musical.

Poges. He rather took to me, I think, and looks upon me as a friend.

O'Killigain. He looks upon you as a fool gathering from the tree of life poor apples, gone bad, and useless, leaving the rosier ones behind, with golden apples, too, dangling down in the dark.

Poges. [*Stunned.*] Oh!

O'Killigain. Why don't you seek to build a house that will give a royal chance of bringing newer skill and a newer idea of life to the men who build it? Why don't you try to bring newer grace of form and line before the eyes of Clune na Geera? Why th' hell don't you try to do something worthwhile? [*Sardonically.*] He looks upon you as a friend? He regards you, man, as a rascal and a hot-pulsed hypocrite!

Poges. [*Indignantly.*] Good God, but that's pure ignorance. Where would the world be without us?

O'Killigain. The giddy globe would wobble, slow down, stand still and death would come quick to us all.

Poges. [*A little puzzled by this remark.*] Eh? Quite. Well, no, not so bad as that, you know, but near it, damned near it.

[*SOUHAUN runs in with a look of dark annoyance on her face.*]

Souhaun. Oh, look at you standing here still, and so much to be done, [*Her voice rises.*]—so much to be done, so much to be done! I asked you to get the roller away from the door an hour ago, and here's Barney after twisting his wrist, trying to climb over it standing in the same old place! [*She catches him by the overall.*] Come, for God's sake, and take the damn thing out of the way!

Poges. [*Pulling her hand away from the overall—angrily.*] Oh, have some decency, order, and dignity, woman! Can't you see I'm having a serious discussion with O'Killigain? [*He turns swiftly on O'Killigain.*] We, sir, are a liberty-loving people, and have always striven to preserve perfect—perfect, mind you—freedom of thought, not only in our own land, but throughout the whole world; but that anyone should be permitted to hold opinions such as are held by that lunatic, just gone out, and are apparently held by you, sir, too, is a perfect scandal and disgrace!

Souhaun. Oh, there's no use of you trying to ride your high horse here in Clune na Geera!

Poges. [*Stormily.*] I'm not trying to ride my high horse in Clune na Geera! What is said in Clune na Geera is a matter of very little importance indeed. But every right-minded man, the world over, knows or ought to know, that wherever we have gone, progress, civilization, truth, justice, honour, humanity, righteousness, and peace have followed at our heels. In the Press, in the Parliament, in the pulpit, or on the battlefield, no lie has ever been uttered by us; no false claim made, no right of man infringed, no law of God ignored, no human law, national or international, broken.

O'Killigain. [*Very quietly.*] Oh, for God's sake, man, don't be pratin' like a pantaloon priest!

Souhaun. [*Trying to push POGES from her, impatiently.*] Go out and get the garden roller!

Poges. [*Loudly.*] I say, sir, that Justice is

England's old nurse; righteousness and peace sit together in her common-room, and the porter at her gate is truth!

O'Killigain. [*Quietly but sarcastically.*] An' God, Himself, is England's butler.

Poges. [*Roaring with rage.*] That's a vile slander, sir!

O'Killigain. Whether it is or no, doesn't matter much, for in a generation or so, the English Empire will be remembered only as a half-forgotten nursery rhyme!

Poges. [*Fiercely, as SOUHAUN is pushing him out.*] An opinion like that deserves the jail!

Souhaun. [*Giving him a last strong push out into one of the back entrances.*] Oh, go on! [*She goes over towards O'Killigain, and stands looking shyly and a little archly at him.*] What a mighty man you are to provoke him into such a tantrum!

O'Killigain. [*After a slight pause.*] Why doesn't he spend his time, money, and energy in building something new, something showing a new idea, leading our eyes to the future?

Souhaun. Oh, I don't know. You like your job here anyhow.

O'Killigain. A little.

Souhaun. A lot, because Avril is here.

O'Killigain. Just as O'Dempsey likes it because you are here.

[*As he is about to go, O'DEMPSEY, the SECOND WORKMAN, appears and speaks to O'Killigain while his gaze is fixed on SOUHAUN.*]

Second Workman. You're wanted on the roof, Jack.

O'Killigain. [*With a laconic laugh.*] More mending—like slappin' the back of a dyin' man!

[*He goes out while the SECOND WORKMAN continues to look shyly but firmly at SOUHAUN.*]

Souhaun. Well, Mr Man, do you find me pleasant to look at?

Second Workman. Yes, you are a fine-lookin' woman, and a fine-lookin' woman shows me a sign that God is smilin'.

Souhaun. [*A little bitterly.*] It's Avril you have in mind, good man, and not me.

Second Workman. When I look at you close, I see you a week or two older than your younger friend, and when you go as bright about the house, an' dress as gay as she does, you look like an earlier summer kissin' a tardier spring goodbye.

Souhaun. It's ridiculous for me to be with Poges. It's like a young bird I feel that has just got command of its wings. [*She pauses*

a moment.] You do think me as a woman worthy to be looked on—you're not just teasing me, are you?

Second Workman. Not I. You are one of the fine sights of the world. [*He lilts.*]

There are many fair things in this world as it goes,
Th' blue skies of summer, the flushin' red rose;
But of all th' fair blossomin' things that men see,
A comely-built lass is the dearest to me!

And you are a comely lass.

Souhaun. [*Coming close to him.*] What's your name?

Second Workman. Me name? Why, O'Dempsey, of course.

Souhaun. No, no; your more familiar name; the name your girl would call you by.

Second Workman. Filib.

Souhaun. [*Lingering over it.*] Filib! What a dear name! What a dear name! [*She suddenly leans towards him and kisses his cheek.*] Filib!

[*She backs away from him a little frightened at what she has done. And bumps into POGES laboriously pulling a gigantic roller as high as he is tall. The heavy iron side discs are vividly painted in panels of red, white, green and yellow. The FIRST WORKMAN is pushing the roller from behind, and is followed by O'KILLIGAIN gazing with laughing amazement at the ponderous machine.*]

POGES. [*Angrily, as SOUHAUN bumps into him.*] Eh, eh, there, look where you are going, can't you?

Souhaun. [*Amazed at the size of the roller.*] God bless us, Cyril, what on earth's that you're carting into the house?

POGES. [*Petulantly.*] Can't you see what it is? The roller, the roller I bought to roll the lawn.

Souhaun. But it's too big, man.

POGES. No, it isn't too big. The man who sold it to me said that the bigger it was, the more effective it would be.

Souhaun. But you'll never be able to pull a mighty thing like that.

POGES. And what's to prevent me from pulling it? Amn't I pulling it now? A child of ten could pull it; well balanced, you know, the man said. Easy to pull, and easier to propel, the man said.

Souhaun. You've just been taken in, Cyril. The thing's altogether too big. [*To the FIRST WORKMAN.*] Isn't it?

First Workman. It looks a size too large to me, ma'am.

POGES. The grass in this district needed a special big roller to level it, the man said, and this was the roller to level it.

First Workman. Sure, that roller ud level a hill.

O'Killigain. The grass'll give way under that, right enough.

Souhaun. The cheek of declaring that a child of ten could pull it like a toy.

First Workman. G'way, ma'am, an' did he really say that now?

POGES. One pull over the lawn with that roller would be enough for the season, the man said.

O'Killigain. An', faith, so it would, an' for every season afther too.

First Workman. Sure, an' wouldn't a specially powerful horse, himself, wilt undher a thing like that! Whoever gave you that, man, musta taken it off an oul' steam-roller.

[*The THIRD WORKMAN appears at entrance to right, and proceeds to take an enjoyable interest in what is happening.*]

Third Workman. Mother o' God, looka what he's after buyin' be th' name of a roller! Isn't it a shame, now, to have imposed on a poor simple inoffensive man with a vehicle like that.

POGES. [*Defiantly.*] It's a bargain, I know it's a bargain; the man said it's a bargain.

Souhaun. [*Mockingly.*] The man said, the man said—ay, and you swallowed everything the man said.

O'Killigain. [*To FIRST WORKMAN.*] Give Mr POGES a hand to take this machine out of the sight of mortal men.

POGES. [*Obstinately.*] I'll take it myself, thank you all. Once you got the knack of balancing it, the man said, you could turn it with your little finger, and I believe what the man said.

O'Killigain. [*To THIRD WORKMAN.*] Here, you go on back to your work; go on, off you go.

[*He follows the THIRD WORKMAN out of the room. POGES gives a mighty push to the roller, propelling it slowly to one of the entrances at the back. The FIRST WORKMAN goes over, and helps him to push it.*]

POGES. [*Fiercely, to FIRST WORKMAN.*] Let go, you! I'll manoeuvre it myself. Let go, I tell you!

First Workman. [*As fiercely, to POGES.*] Can't you see, man, the declivity runnin' down the passage, that'll lead you, if the roller once gets outa hand, into God knows where?

Poges. [With a roar into the face of the FIRST WORKMAN.] Let go! [The FIRST WORKMAN, startled, suddenly lets go his hold of the roller, and the roller shoots forward down the declivity, POGES going with it, like a flash of lightning. Heard as he is careening down the passage—with anguish in his voice.] Help!

[There is a pause of a few moments, then a thud is heard, followed by a rumbling crash of falling bricks and mortar; then silence again. The FIRST WORKMAN fearfully and hastily blesses himself—makes the Sign of the Cross.]

First Workman. [As he blesses himself.]

Jesus, Mary, an' Joseph!

Souhaun. [With vehement rage.] The blasted fool! He has rocked the house and killed himself and hasn't made his will.

First Workman. [Staring down the passage.] Right through the wall, he's gone! [He runs to where the hole is in the ceiling, gets a seat, and stands on it. Calling up to the hole.] Eh, Cornelius, eh, quick!

[The face of the YELLOW-BEARDED MAN appears at the hole, and he thrusts down his head as far as it will go.]

Yellow-Bearded Man. Well, what's up now?

First Workman. [Excitedly.] The oul' man, the oul' fool, has gone right through the wall with the roller, an' shook the house—bang!

Yellow-Bearded Man. Didn't I think it was an earthquake? [Testily.] An' don't be tellin' me these things while I'm up here. Can't you wait till I'm down in th' world o' men, and can enjoy these things happenin'?

First Workman. [Running out.] Mr O'Killigain, Jack, eh, Jack!

[SOUHAUN returns, followed by CLOYNE and BARNEY leading in the frightened POGES, powdered with the dust of the falling mortar. SOUHAUN arranges a mattress for him on which he squats, supported by pillows.]

Souhaun. You were warned, you were warned, and you would have your own way. It's fortunate you are, indeed, that none of your bones is broken.

Poges. [Moaningly.] Brandy, get me some brandy. [BARNEY goes out, and comes back with a glass, brandy and soda-water. He fills out a glassful and gives it to POGES. After he has drunk the brandy,—to CLOYNE and BARNEY.] Go away, you two, and don't stand there gaping at me! [They go. Musingly.] What a rascal that man must be who sold me the roller! In this simple country, among a simple people, where the very air is

redolent with fairy lore, that such a dangerous and materialistic mind should be lurking!

Souhaun. For God's sake, man, talk sense.

Poges. [Shaking his head sorrowfully.] A gay and charming people, but irresponsible, utterly irresponsible.

[O'KILLIGAIN appears at the right entrance with a cloudy look on his face.]

O'Killigain. Look here, that Basil of yours is goin' about the grounds, carrying a fully-cocked gun at a dangerous angle. He'll do harm. Send someone to take it off him, or I'll twist it out of his hands myself! And you'll want to be more careful, yourself, or you'll have th' oul' house down!

Poges. [Indignantly.] Oh, what a conceited fool that fellow is—going about to do dangerous damage for want of a little commonsense and caution. I don't believe he ever fired a gun in his life. [To SOUHAUN.] Go out, dear, and take it off him, before he shoots somebody—and go quick! [SOUHAUN runs out by the entrance on the right, and O'KILLIGAIN is following her when POGES speaks to him, and halts him at the entrance.] Oh yes, Mr O'Killigain, a word please. [He drinks some more brandy.] Er, just a word. People are saying there's a rumor going about that you and—and Miss Avril are—are, well, seen together at times.

O'Killigain. Well?

Poges. Well? Damn it, man, she's a lady, Mr Stoke's a gentleman, and you're only a—a tradesman!

O'Killigain. Well?

Poges. Well? Oh, don't be welling me. The week she was away from here was bad enough, and very suspicious. She had the damned cheek to say she was with you.

O'Killigain. So she was.

Poges. So she was, was she? Well, it's dishonourable, and it will have to stop.

O'Killigain. And who'll stop it?

Poges. [Firmly.] I and Mr Stoke will stop it.

O'Killigain. [Quietly.] You pair of miserable, old hypocritical, wizened old gets, I'd like to see you trying!

Poges. [Choking with rage.] Get out of the house, and come here no more! I'll write to your parish priest! I'll—[A shot rings out in the grounds outside.] Good God, the fool has shot someone!

[O'KILLIGAIN goes off in a hurry. There is a pause. Then the YELLOW-BEARDED FACE is thrust through the hole in the ceiling as far as it can go, and shouts down at POGES sitting like Buddha on the mattress.]

Yellow-Bearded Man. [To POGES.] He's shot her, shot her dead, the poor, little, innocent creature!

Poges. [Up to the YELLOW-BEARDED MAN.] Shot who, shot who, man?

Yellow-Bearded Man. Without warnin' he done it, without a flicker of an eyelid, he sent her into the unknown!

Poges. [Murmuring in agony.] Avril! Oh, my God, little Avril. The curse of the Irish thorn-tree is on us!

Yellow-Bearded Man. [Savagely.]

Twenty-five pounds, an' not a penny less, he'll pay for it, or I'll have the heavy law on him. I'd ha' let you have her at first for the twenty, but in some compensation for th' agony of seein' the poor thing sink down

into death, I'll have to get the other five, or I'll have the heavy law on him!

Poges. What are you talking about, man?

Yellow-Bearded Man. Be th' way, you don't know that that lean, skulkin' friend o' yours has shot dead me poor little, innocent, poor little cow! [Sarcastically.] He thought it was a bull!

Poges. [Bewildered.] Oh, what a terrible country to have anything to do with! Reverence for a house with dignity in all its corners has been turned into ridicule; the respect due to myself has been blown away by a lout's laughter. A wall's demolished, and an innocent animal's shot dead: what an awful country to be living in. A no-man's land; a waste land; a wilderness.

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

Before the room appears, the sounds of falling rain and swishing wind are heard; and these go on at intervals throughout the scene.

SCENE: The same as in the preceding act; but some more articles of furniture have been added to the room. Between the entrance to the right at the back, and the right wall, stands what is said to be a Jacobean China-cabinet, filled with old pieces of china. At each side of the larger entrance on the right stands an armoured figure, comical-looking things, with long sharp points protruding where the man's nose (if a man were inside the suit) would certainly be; each figure, standing stiff, holds a long halberd well out from his body. Over these are crossed pennons, green and blue, fixed on the wall. A blazing fire is in the fireplace. No one is in the room.

[After a moment, POGES, dressed in his jazz-patterned overall, with a paper in his hand, runs in, and rushes over to the telephone.]

Poges. [Into the mouthpiece—hurriedly.] Get me—Oh, good evening, good evening. This is Mr Poges, Tudor Manor. Get me St. Paul, London: 123. The house is getting on all right, thank you. Be quick, please. [Warmly.] There's no seems in it; I am in a hurry. Oh, the ladies are quite well, sir. No, no, no; I don't want to go to an all-night dance to hear Irish songs sung! I want St.

Paul! Eh? No, St. Peter won't do; please don't try to be funny! I am on very serious business. Get me the number I want at once! [He takes the mouthpiece from his mouth, and gives vent to a roaring growl of anger.] Whether it won't matter a hundred years from now, isn't the point, sir. [Shouting.] Damn it, get me St. Paul! [Bursting with rage.] No wonder I use bad language. Is this the way business is done here? No wonder this country's as it is. What's wrong with it? [Roaring.] Everything's wrong with it! You what? You hope my stay here will help to civilize me a little! [He looks stupefied; then he slams the receiver on the hook. Almost instantly the 'phone rings. He whips off the receiver again, and puts it to his ear.] What the hell does this—eh? Who are you? St. Paul? Good God! This is Poges, Bradford. Oh, it's an awful place. People helpless, superstitious, and ignorant. I want you to get me five hundred shares in the Well-tonian Cement Co.; shares are bound to jump, the minute the bombing starts seriously. They have jumped? Ah. What, a fiver a share, now? Well, get me two fifty. What? Not one to be had? [Clicking his tongue.] Ditch ditch. Run on them, eh? One wouldn't imagine there'd be so many trying to cash in on splintered bodies. The world, the world, Bradford! Yes, yes, of course; if there's any going, snap them up. Righto, good-bye.

[BARNEY appears at the entrance on the right.]

Barney. Canon Creehewel would like to speak to you, sir.

Poges. Right; send the Canon in to me.

[BARNEY goes; and, in a second or so, the CANON comes in. He is inclined to be portly, rather a hard face, nicely fitted clothes, head bald at the front, and bushy greying hair at the back of his head and over his ears. He is wearing a soft hat, sodden with rain, which he puts on the end of the table when he comes in; and a long dark cloak, glistening with rain, too. He comes over eager to POGES, with a smile on his face, and outstretched hand.]

Canon. Ah, my dear friend, I'm so glad to have a chance of a word with you. How are you liking Clune na Geera?

Poges. Splendid, though the weather has been cold and very wet. Take your cloak off.

Canon. [Taking off his cloak.] Isn't it a nuisance? And we're in for more of it, by all accounts. If it goes on much more, the district will be a dismal swamp.

Poges. [Indicating a seat.] Sit down, Canon, sit down. Glass of sherry?

[THE CANON sits, and POGES sits, too, opposite the CANON.]

Canon. No thanks. I drink rarely. [Apologetically.] Good example, you know. Well, welcome, my dear sir, to our district. You have a very beautiful house here. An old house, but a fine one. It is almost a sacred thing to keep an old thing from dying, sir; for whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely and of good report, are invariably found close to, and, sometimes, intimately enclosed in the life and being of ages that have passed, and in the life of men and women who have gone away before us.

Poges. [Gratified.] I wholeheartedly agree with you, reverend sir. I feel it, I know it.

Canon. With all its frills, its frivolities, its studied ceremonial, however gayly coloured its leisure may have been, the past had in it the core of virtue; while the present swirl of young life, I'm saying, with its feverish strut of pretended bravery, its tawdry carelessness about the relation and rule of religion to man, with all its frantic sthretching of pleasure into every second of life, contains within it a tawny core of fear, that is turning darker with every chime of the passing hours!

[The rain and wind are plainly heard.]

Poges. [Leaning towards the CANON—eagerly.] We must lengthen our arm back to

the past and pluck back some of the good things that haven't gone away as far from us as the dead who knew them.

Canon. A worthy enterprise, dear sir, and I hope you and your good people will be a help to us here to bring some of the slow movement of the past into the reckless and Godless speed of the present. [He leans over towards POGES till their heads nearly touch.] You and yours can do much to assist the clergy to keep a sensible check on the lower inclinations of the people, a work which should be near the heart of every sensible and responsible person with a stake in the country.

Poges. I'll do all I can. [Leans back with an air of business importance.] From the practical point of view, how am I to help?

Canon. [Dropping a little into the idiom of the district.] Help us to curtail th' damned activity of the devilish dance halls! In a month or less, the innocent disthricht becomes worse than your Leicester Square in London, when the night has fallen, if the dance halls are allowed to go ahead without the control of the clergy an' responsible people.

Poges. [Shocked.] Good God! Such a condition of things among a simple, charming, and pastoral people amazes me.

Canon. [Warning to it.] Arra, wouldn't it sicken you, when the hot days come, to see fools of oul' men an' fools of oul' women, too, settin' a bad example, goin' about nearly naked, in their coloured shorts, an' brazen-faced lassies mixed among them in low-cut bodices, defiant short skirts, an' shorter trousers, murderin' modesty with a restless an' a reckless hand!

Poges. A lamentable state of affairs, entirely, sir.

Canon. [Rising and going over close to POGES—intensely.] An' like Eden, sir, we've a snake in our garden, too!

Poges. Oh!

Canon. O'Killigain!

Poges. Ah!

[The wind and the rain are plainly heard.]

Canon. Guard your womenfolk from him, for no woman is safe with that man. He publicly defends the wearing of low-necked blouses by brazen hussies; he stands be the practice of courting couples walking the highways and byways be night; why, one moonlight night, meetin' my curate dhrivin' home a lasciviously-minded girl, O'Killigain tore the stock from the curate's hand, an' smashed it into pieces! A dangerous man, my dear sir, a most dangerous man.

Poges. [A little nervously.] I'm what

you'd call a foreigner down here, and so couldn't interfere with O'Killigain, personally; but what I can do to help you, I certainly will, in any other way.

Canon. Thank you—I guessed you would. Your fifty pounds have helped a lot already. And now I've taken up a lot of your time and must go. [*He takes up his hat.*] By the way, how's the workman I sent you getting along?

Poges. Which one?

Canon. The one doing your electric light—a yellow-bearded fellow. A most pious chap.

Poges. [*Emphatically.*] Oh, he's getting along splendidly!

Canon. I'm glad to hear it. A good fellow—a Knight of St. Columbus.

Poges. Well, now, I never knew Columbus was a Saint.

Canon. [*Smiling indulgently.*] Oh, yes indeed; a great Irish Saint.

Poges. I always thought he was an American.

Canon. An American; who?

Poges. Christopher Columbus.

Canon. [*Smiling.*] Oh, there were two Columbuses, one Irish and the other—er—American.

[As the CANON is about to move away, AVRIL, followed by SOUHAUN, dances into the room from an entrance at the back. She is dressed in a low-cut blouse, short tailor-made skirt, and soft-leather high boots moulded to her calves, and reaching to just below her knees; and looks, indeed, a very tempting and desirable young hussy. She has a mackintosh over her arms. SOUHAUN, too, is dressed in very short shorts, of vivid crimson, and a black V-necked jersey, looking as enticing, in a more mature way, as young AVRIL, herself. POGES is a little embarrassed, but the good CANON does not flicker an eyelid. SOUHAUN whips off POGES' overall, and shows him in a green jersey and brown shorts.]

Souhaun. You mustn't receive the Canon, dear, in an overall!

Avril. I say, Cyril, old boy, when are we going to get that damned bathroom? It's a bit thick trying to have a bath in a basin.

[She sees the CANON and stops to gaze at him.]

Poges. [*Introducing her.*] Mr Stoke's—er—wife—Miss Avril, Canon. [*Introducing SOUHAUN.*] My—er—wife, Miss Souhaun.

Canon. [*Bowing graciously—to AVRIL.*] My dear, young lady. [*To SOUHAUN.*] Madam, I'm very pleased to know you.

Avril. [*To POGES.*] Well, when are we going to have a decent bathroom, old cock o' th' walk?

Poges. [*Deprecatingly.*] The Canon's here, Avril.

Canon. [*Jovially.*] Youthful spirits, sir, youthful spirits.

Poges. We'll have a bathroom, if we can fit one in without injuring the harmony of the old house. The Tudor period never saw a bathroom. This generation's getting soft, Canon; we want hardening.

Avril. Bunkum!

Poges. [*Indignantly.*] It's anything but bunkum! Shakespeare had to do without one.

Souhaun. But, surely, dear, you must know that the Tudor people knew nothing about the use of steam?

[BASIL now appears at an entrance at the back, and when he sees the company, he stays there and listens. He is dressed in a yellow jersey and black shorts. No one notices him.]

Poges. [*Petulantly.*] Steam! We stand here, in the centre, not of a house, but of a great civilization, and you mention steam!

Souhaun. In the centre of a hot bath, dear, I can remain in the centre of your civilization.

Basil. [*Joining in—looking like a statue in the doorway.*] Not precisely, Souhaun, for it would require, or at least, postulate, a full and concentrated retirement through the avenues of thought back to the time of which the visible surroundings are vividly, but quiescently reminiscent, till thought and all its correlations become su-su-su-such a sapient and sensuous determinate of all seen, heard, and felt in the retrospective activities of the mind, and the civilization remembered, recognized, and enjoyed, becomes, consciously and sub-consciously, an immanent and integral part of the person, determining the conception of the conscious thought, interrelating with the, with the outward and inward action and reaction of all—or most of the bodily senses, incorporating the outward vision of sight with the inward vision of the inward conception of the—of the fragmentary stimuli—er—stimuli, into a perfect and harmonious whole; a thing, if I may be allowed to say so, if not impossible is, at least improbable, sitting down or indeed, even standing up in the middle of a hot bath.

Avril. [*With mock enthusiasm.*] Hooray!

Poges. [*To the CANON.*] Mr Stoke, Canon; cousin to the uncle of the K.G., and passed through Oxford.

Canon. Really, well, well, remarkable connections. [*In the far distance a faint clap of thunder is heard; the CANON cocks his ear to listen.*] I must be off. Bad sign. The soft rain that's falling may change to a down-pour, and I've a long way to go.

[*Puts on his cloak.* BARNEY and CLOYNE come in carrying a heavy Jacobean chair between them.]

Souhaun. Ah, the Jacobin chair. [*Indicating the way.*] Out in the entrance hall, Barney.

Poges. Let's look at it a second. [*BARNEY and CLOYNE pause.*] Ah, Canon, old things take a lot of beating.

Canon. They do, they do, sir. Well, I must go now.

Poges. [*Halting him.*] One second, sir. [*He goes to the table, writes a cheque and hands it to the CANON.*] Another little trifle to keep things going, Canon.

Canon. Twenty-five pounds! Oh, thank you, and God bless you, my very dear sir.

Souhaun. You must come to dinner some night.

Canon. I will, I will, with pleasure; goodbye all.

[*Midst a murmur of goodbyes the CANON goes out.*]

Poges. [*Indignantly.*] Never showed the slightest interest in the Jacobin chair. Ignorance; Irish ignorance! [*Angrily—to CLOYNE and BARNEY, who are holding the chair like a salesman displaying a piece of silk.*] Bring the damned thing into the Entrance Hall, will you, and don't stand there like fools! [*CLOYNE, in her hurry, jerks the chair from BARNEY'S hold and it bumps to the floor.*] Oh, butter-fingers, d'y'e want to destroy it? That's a Jacobin chair, man, a Jacobin chair.

Barney. [*With a yell as he carries out the chair with CLOYNE.*] Well, if I let a damned chair fall, I didn't knock a wall down!

Poges. Impudent rascal. The more you do for them, the less they think of you! [*He bustles into his overall again.*] Now to business. What'll we do first? The rugs?

Souhaun. There's no use of trying the rugs till you get your quatto-centro bureau in position. Then we'll be able to see if the colour of the rugs suits the bureau.

[*AVRIL has put on her mackintosh and sidled over to the entrance on right, leading to the Hall, and is about to slip out, when BASIL darts to her side and catches her arm.*]

Basil. Where are you slipping off to?

Avril. I'm going for a brisk walk along the bank of the brimming river. I'm fed up

carrying things about to get this foolish old house in order.

Poges. In this weather? Nonsense!

Basil. A good idea; I'll go with you, darling.

Avril. [*With a malevolent look at him.*] Wouldn't you like to, eh? Take my advice and don't! [*To POGES.*] Ay, in this weather.

[*She goes quickly, leaving BASIL, undecided, looking after her.*]

Basil. [*Bitterly.*] She's going to go with O'Killigain!

Souhaun. Nonsense. She can't be out of your sight for a minute, but you imagine the girl's with O'Killigain. The rain'll soon send her back. [*To POGES.*] You see about locking the bureau, while I get the men to carry it in for you.

[*POGES goes by one of the entrances at back.*]

Basil. [*Going towards entrance at back.*] I tell you the jade's gone after O'Killigain.

Souhaun. [*Warningly.*] If I were you, Basil, I shouldn't press hard after little Avril; you are a little too consequential to please her always.

Basil. [*Maliciously—as he goes out.*] And you, me lady, are a lot too old to please O'Killigain at any time!

[*SOUHAUN stands stiff for a few moments; then she goes quickly to the entrance to the Hall and is seen beckoning for one of the WORKMEN.*]

Souhaun. [*Calling.*] One of you, come here, please. [*The SECOND WORKMAN comes into the room and stands near the entrance, looking quietly at SOUHAUN.*] Send Mr O'Killigain in to me, please.

Second Workman. He's gone to the station to see after a wagonload o' bricks.

Souhaun. [*Slowly, after a pause.*] By himself?

Second Workman. [*After a pause.*] With th' handsome young woman. [*A pause.*] You're a handsome woman yourself; you're Irish too; an' y'ought to be sensible.

Souhaun. [*Slowly.*] Am I not sensible, good man?

Second Workman. [*Earnestly.*] Your shinin' eyes can always say you are; an' soon you'll tire o' nestin' in a dusty nook, with the hills outside an' th' roads for walkin'!

Souhaun. I will, will I?

Second Workman. [*With his eyes turned towards the ground.*] Ay, will you, an' dance away from a smoky bragger who thinks th' world spins round on th' rim of a coin; you'll hurry away from him, I'm sayin', an' it's a glad heart'll lighten th' journey to a one'll

find a place for your little hand in th' white clouds, an' a place for your saucy head in th' blue o' the sky.

Souhaun. [*With a touch of mockery.*] Yourself, for instance?

Second Workman. It's waitin' warm, he'll be, to please you highly, an' show you wondhers of a manly manner.

Souhaun. [*Laughing, with a little catch in the laugh.*] A daughter of the Ormond with a workman!

Second Workman. [*Raising his head proudly and looking steadily at her.*] An older name is his, an' an older glory than the honour thrown to th' earl o' Ormond when he crouched for favour at the English feet!

[*The SECOND WORKMAN looks at SOUHAUN, and SOUHAUN looks at the SECOND WORKMAN for a moment, then she turns and goes slowly out by right entrance at back.*]

Third Workman. [*Appearing at the back, left entrance.*] Here, Philib, what'r you doin'? You're to give us a hand to get in the oul' codger's bureau.

[*The two of them go out by the entrance to the left at back. After a second or two, the sound of scuffling and of voices is heard just outside the narrow entrance through which the two men have gone out, then POGES comes in with an anxious look on his face, turns and concentrates his gaze on the entrance. Presently the end of the big gilded bureau—it is really a big gilded chest—comes in sight round the corner, with the THREE WORKMEN puffing, pulling, pushing, and scuffling it along, each giving orders to the other two, to the concern of poor old POGES. When the bureau comes to the entrance, it can be seen to be a very tight fit.*]

First Workman. A little to the ayste, there, a little more to the ayste, can't you!

Second Workman. No, west, west; can't you see it'll jam if yous cant it to the ayste? To th' west, I'm tellin' yous!

Poges. [*Anxiously.*] Easy, boys, easy, now; take care, take care; that's a thing you won't meet every day, you know. I had an anxious time while it was coming over.

Third Workman. [*Taking no notice of POGES.*] Where th' hell are yous shovin'? Are yous blind, or wha'? No squirmin'll get it in that way. [*Recklessly.*] Here, throw th' thing up on its hind legs an' let her go!

Poges. [*Loudly and anxiously.*] Eh, there, eh; steady, steady. Careful, how you handle that. Don't dare to throw her up on her hind

legs! I can't have a precious thing like that scratched and mangled. That's a quatto-centro piece of furniture, and hasn't another piece like it in the world.

First Workman. [*To the OTHERS.*] Hear what the gentleman's sayin' to yous! Amnt I tired tellin' yous yous ud look long before yous ud find such a piece o' furniture in Cluna na Geera? Yous can't fling a thing like this about the way you'd fling about an oul' kitchen chair. [*To POGES.*] Amnt I right, sir?

Poges. Yes, yes; quite right, my man. Thousands of people would give a fortune to possess a thing like that bureau. So gently, boys, gently. The slightest scratch will do irreparable damage.

First Workman. See, boys, it's a quatto-centro lump o' furniture, an' so needs gentle handlin'. [*To SECOND WORKMAN.*] You, Philib, there, give it a sudden swing to the ayste, an' while she's swingin', we'll shoot her ahead.

Second Workman. [*Angrily.*] How am I goin' to give her a sudden swing to the ayste when there's no purchase to get a grip of her? Squatto-centro, or notto-centro, I'm not goin' to let it whip a slice outa my hand!

Third Workman. [*Thoughtfully.*] Th' only way to get it in proper, is to get a sledge-hammer an' knock down some o' th' archway.

Poges. [*Indignantly.*] Knock down some of the archway! You'll do no such thing! You'll be suggesting that the house should be knocked down next. There's no sledge-hammer to be brought within sight of this precious bureau. [*Leaning over towards the MEN.*] Listen: this is a piece of quatto-centro—understand that, the whole of you, please!

First Workman. [*To the OTHERS.*] There, now, what did I tell yous? Yous hear what the gentleman says.

Poges. It ought to go in easily, if you knew your job. The driver of the furniture-van looked at this entrance and told me not to worry; that the bureau would slide in without the slightest trouble.

First Workman. [*Scornfully.*] Is it Larry Lunigan said that, now, did he? Don't mind anything Larry Lunigan says, sir. If your head was split, he'd say it was only a scratch, to keep your heart up.

Third Workman. Even if you were dead, he'd tell your wife to wait, an' say you never could be sure of anything. An' we're not furniture shifters, sir.

Poges. Well, I'm sure of one thing; that bureau is coming into this room, and coming in without a scratch.

Third Workman. 'Course it is.

First Workman. Time an' patience'll do it.

Poges. [*Looking closely at the bureau—in anguish.*] Oh, my God, there's the stone wall eating into its edge! Get it away, pull it out, shove it in, you fools! [*As they shove.*] Wait, wait!

First Workman. [*Soothingly.*] I shouldn't worry, sir; a shavin' or two off is th' worst that can happen to it.

Poges. Wait, wait a second. I'll go and get some cushions and pillows to guard the sides from the wall. [*He runs out by the adjoining entrance for the cushions.*]

First Workman. J'ever see such an oul' fustherer in your life? You'd think the thing was on its way to the kingdom of heaven, th' way he's cryin' over it.

Third Workman. With a look on his ugly oul' gob, like the tune th' oul' cow died of.

First Workman. A quatto-centro, mind you, says he.

Third Workman. Seven hundred years an' more old, says he. Well, it's near time it met its death, anyhow.

First Workman. Here, let's get it in before he comes back billowin' with cushions. It's well able to take a knock or two.

Second Workman. Here's th' crowbar he wouldn't let us use. [*He lifts up a big crowbar.*] We'll inch it in be main strength. Now, boys, get your shoulders to the quatto-centro while I heave with th' bar! [*To FIRST WORKMAN.*] Start a shanty, Bill, to give us encouragement.

First Workman. [*Chanting quickly, while they all brace themselves.*]

What shall we do with th' dhrunken sailor,
What shall we do with th' dhrunken sailor,
What shall we do with th' dhrunken sailor,
Early in th' mornin'?

All. [*Together—shoving and tugging vehemently.*]

Pull away, an' up she rises,
Pull away, an' up she rises,
Pull away, an' up she rises,
Early in th' mornin'!

[*POGES rushes in with some cushions in his arms. He is frantic when he sees what the MEN are doing. As he rushes in he is accompanied by a peal of thunder, louder than the last, but still fairly faint. As he comes to a halt near the bureau, the peal ends.*]

Poges. [*Enraged.*] What, in the devil's name, are you trying to do? Do you want to burst it to bits? Oh, why did I ever bring my poor quatto-centro to a country like this? Shove it from the wall, shove it from the wall, till I put a cushion in!

First Workman. Sure, it won't go far enough away from the wall to fit a cushion, man.

Poges. [*Frantically.*] Do what you're told, do what you're told. [*He drops the cushions, seizes the edge of the bureau and tries to pull it from the wall.*] Here, somebody, help me! [*Before he is aware of it, the FIRST WORKMAN leaps on to the top of the bureau to cross over to him, his heavy hob-nailed boots scraping the top of it. Shouting at him.*] Get down, get down, man!

First Workman. [*Astonished.*] Amnt I only comin' across to help you?

Poges. [*Yelling at him.*] That's a quatto-centro, that's a quatto-centro, man!

First Workman. Sure, I know it is.

Poges. Then get off it, get off it—sticking your hob-nailed boots through and through it!

First Workman. [*Lifting up a foot so that the sole of the boot can be seen.*] Is it that, sir? Sure, th' nails are worn so soft an' smooth, they wouldn't mark the wing of a butterfly.

Poges. [*Roaring.*] Get down, get down at once!

[*The FIRST WORKMAN jumps off the bureau back among his mates.*]

Second Workman. [*Muttering loudly.*] It ud be a god-send to some I know if they opened their eyes to th' sights an' wondhers showin'.

Poges. Now, no talk; and don't do anything till I give the order.

Men. All right, sir; go ahead; we're waitin'.

Poges. When I say go, you swing it to the right, while I swing it to the left. Are you all ready?

First Workman. Ready an' waitin' an' willin'.

Poges. Go! [*They all swing to the left, and POGES' foot is caught between the bureau and the archway. He lets a squeal out of him. In anguish.*] Release my foot, my foot's caught! Why did you all swing left? Don't you know right from left?

Third Workman. You should have said ayste, sir.

Poges. Shove it off, shove it from my foot!

First Workman. [*Placing the crowbar between archway, against the column, and the bureau.*] Now, boys, all together—heave yo ho! [*There is a mighty heave from them, one with the bar, the others with their shoulders. The bureau moves slowly; a crack is heard; the column snaps with the push of the bar against it; and falls over the bureau,*

which suddenly shoots forward right into the middle of the room, the MEN stumbling after it. The MEN look triumphantly at the bureau, the FIRST WORKMAN leaning on the crowbar, like a warrior leaning on his spear. POGES rubs his foot and contemplates the damage to the bureau and the entrance.] There she is for you, now sir; right where you want her to be.

Third Workman. I knew well patience ud do it in the end.

Poges. Oh, look at the bureau and look at the entrance!

First Workman. [Confidently.] Oh, a spot o' cement an' a lick o' white paint'll make th' entrance look as young as ever again.

[BASIL and SOUHAUN come in, followed by CLOYNE and BARNEY, who are carrying a rug between them. They leave it on the floor. BASIL is wearing very wide plus fours.]

Souhaun. We're getting the house into some kind of order at last. [She sees the damage.] Oh, who's caused all the wreckage?

Poges. [Sarcastically.] Your very clever countrymen, dear.

Basil. [Mockingly.] And the high opinion they have of themselves.

Second Workman. There is sweet music in the land, but not for th' deaf; there is wisdom, too, but it is not in a desk it is; but out in th' hills, an' in the life of all things rovin' around, undher th' blue sky.

Poges. [Angrily.] Take this broken column away and be off to your work again.

[The WORKMEN take away the column and go out by entrance leading to the Hall.]

Souhaun. Let us try the rugs. [CLOYNE and BARNEY spread on the floor a rug scattered over with brightly-coloured geometrical patterns. CLOYNE and BARNEY then go out; the rest stare at the rug.] Rather gay-looking for the floor of a Tudor house, dear.

Basil. [Decidedly.] Too bright and too modern.

Poges. Where? How? Why?

Basil. The Tudors, my dear sir, were a sensible and sober people, and wouldn't tolerate anything that was vulgar, or, shall I say, conspicuous.

Souhaun. [With some mockery.] You see, darling, it was taste, and not steam that was everything in those days.

Basil. Quite, Souhaun; taste was the Tudor er—er—monumentum aere perennius.

Poges. I don't know everything, my dear sir; but I do know something about the period that this house—er—exemplifies; in

fact, the period was so riotous in colour that the men's breeches had one leg blue and the other leg red, or vice versa.

Basil. [With a patronizing laugh.] Ah, old boy, that wasn't the Tudor period.

Poges. What period was it then?

Souhaun. The Hiawatha period.

Poges. [Indignantly—to SOUHAUN.] This is no joke, please. [To BASIL.] What period was it, then?

Basil. [Airily.] Not the Tudor period, certainly; no, certainly not, old boy.

Poges. [Contemptuously.] Pshaw! You don't know it yourself. [From an entrance at back the SECOND WORKMAN appears wheeling a barrow filled with bricks. Passing by the disputants, on his way to the Hall entrance, he wheels the barrow over the rug. Shouting at him.] Where the hell are you going with your dirty barrow?

Second Workman. [Dropping the shafts of the barrow, and turning to answer POGES.] I'm bringin' a barrow o' bricks to O'Killigain, sir.

Basil. Oh, he's back, is he?

Poges. What the hell do you think you're doing, man?

Second Workman. Amnt I after tellin' you, I'm bringin' a barrow o' bricks to O'Killigain?

Poges. What d'ye mean, trundling your dirty barrow over a handsome rug, laid out for inspection?

Second Workman. What d'ye want me to do? Take th' barrow o' bricks up in me arms an' fly over it?

Basil. [With great dignity.] Take it away at once, sir, and don't show impertinence to your betters.

Second Workman. [Eyeing BASIL with scorn.] Jasus, looka what calls itself a better man than me!

[O'KILLIGAIN appears at the entrance leading to the Hall.]

Poges. [Earnestly—to the SECOND WORKMAN.] My man, you're cheeking a cousin of a K.G. whose family goes back to—to— [Turning to BASIL.] William the Conqueror, isn't it?

Basil. [Stiffening—with proud complacency.] Farther back, old boy—Alfred; the last man of the last family at the Battle of Hastings.

Poges. [Impressively.] There, you see.

Souhaun. [With a sign of mockery in her voice.] And the ancient gentleman passed through Oxford, too.

O'Killigain. [From the archway.] The city of dissolute might!

Second Workman. [With mock defer-

ence.] D'ye tell me that, now? Why didn't you make me aware of all that glory, before I began to speak? Isn't it an alarmin' thing to hear of the ancientoology of a being that I took to be an ordinary man! An' what might be the ancient gentleman's ancient name?

Poges. Basil, Horatio Nelson, Kaiser Stoke and, on his mother's side, Churchill.

Second Workman. A right worthy name. It mayn't have a musical sound, but it has a steady one. There's no flightiness in that name. An' now, would you like to know mine?

Poges. [*Amusedly.*] Here, be off with you to your work; as if your name mattered much.

Second Workman. Me name's O'Dempsey, of the Clan that were lords of Offaly, ere his ancient highness here was a thousand years from bein' born; a Clan that shretches back as far as the time before an Englishman thought of buildin' a weedy shelther; an' farther back to a day or two after th' one when the sun, herself, was called upon to shine.

[*He takes hold of the shafts of the barrow, preparatory to starting off.*]

Poges. [*Contemptuously.*] You don't look it, my poor man!

Second Workman. [*As he wheels the barrow out.*] I feel it; an' th' river's risin'.

Poges. [*Severely, to O'Killigain.*] You really oughtn't to allow, much more encourage, this silly, ignorant and superstitious conceit among your men; it is something close to scandalous!

O'Killigain. [*Quoting.*] They go their own gait: looking carelessly in the faces of presidents and governors, as to say, *Who are you?*

Poges. [*Imperatively.*] Well, it's not going to be heard in this house! The bobtag and ragtail must be made to keep their free and easy manners at a distance. Dignity reigns here.

[*A loud peal of thunder is heard in the distance, and the room darkens a little.*]

O'Killigain. It's raining.

Poges. Eh?

O'Killigain. It's raining hard.

Souhaun. [*Shivering.*] And growing cold. *O'Killigain.* And old things are perishing.

Second Workman. [*Appearing at entrance.*] We're knocking off, O'Killigain, for the rain is heavier, an' th' winds are keen.

O'Killigain. You do well to knock off, for it is waste of time to try to butthress up a tumbling house.

Souhaun. [*Over to the SECOND WORK-*

MAN.] The house'll be lonesome without you.

Second Workman. Come, then, an' abide with the men o' th' wide wathers, who can go off in a tiny curragh o' thought to the New Island with th' outgo'in' tide, an' come back be th' same tide sweepin' in again!

Poges. [*Mockingly—to SOUHAUN, clapping her on the back.*] There's a high and hearty invitation to you, me lady!

[*AVRIL comes in, and dances over to BASIL.*]

Souhaun. [*Gleefully poking POGES in the ribs—to SECOND WORKMAN.*] A long sail on the widening waters, no less; what gift is offered when the tide returns, good man?

Second Workman. With firm-fed men an' comely, cordial women, there'll be laughter round a red fire when the mists are risin', when th' roads an' fields are frosty, an' when th' night is still.

Souhaun. [*In a mocking voice—to POGES.*] There, now, dear, is there anything more in the world than these that you can give?

Poges. [*With pretended dismay.*] He has me beaten; what am I going to do, at all, at all!

Second Workman. A portion, too, with them who, ruddy-faced, were first in battle, with crimson cloak, white coat, an' silver belt studded with splendour by a cunning hand; a portion, too, with them of paler faces, an' dhressed in dimmer clothes, who, fearless, stepped a straight way to th' gallows, silent an' darin' in th' midst of a yelled-out Sassenach song!

Souhaun. [*Trying to speak mockingly, but developing a slight catch in her voice; for she has been moved by the SECOND WORKMAN'S words.*] Where is the lady who would be slow to give a man with such a coaxing way an invitation to her pillow?

Avril. [*Sees her friend is affected. She comes close to her, touches her on the arm.*] Souhaun, come an' show me your newest dhresses, an' don't stay listenin' to his thrancin' talk.

Souhaun. [*Shaking off AVRIL'S hand. Falling into the Irish idiom.*] Let me be, girl, for it's right an' lovely listening to a voice that's makin' gold embroidery out o' dancin' words.

Poges. [*Mockingly.*] Gold embroidery out of dancing words—we'll have to kiss the Blarney Stone, Basil.

O'Killigain. [*Ignoring POGES.*] An' you, young girl, sweet bud of an out-spreading three, graft yourself on to the living, and don't stay hidden any longer here. Come

where the rain is heavy, where the frost frets, and where the sun is warm. Avril, pulse of my heart, listen to me, an' let longin' flood into your heart for the call of life. The ruined young rowan tree, withered away now, can awaken again, an' spread its fragrance around us. Spit out what's here an' come where love is fierce an' fond an' fruitful. Come, lass, where there's things to say an' things to do an' love at the endings!

Second Workman. Jack has spoken fair, an' there's no handsome hindrance near to stop yous. What's here but a creakin' grandeur an' poor witherin' talk; salt food without dhrink to go with it; an' a purple dhryness turnin' timidly to dust?

Basil. Salt food without drink; purple dryness turning to dust—did you hear, Cyril?

Poges. [*Mocking gaily.*] I'm fairly moidered, I am.

O'Killigain. [*Coming closer to AVRIL.*] Aren't me words a star in your ear, lass? Haven't you heard them? They've hit your young breast, lass. Come with me, I say; come away from where rich ignorance is a blessing and foolishness a gift of God! Come to th' house on th' hill: the door is open, the fire's alight on the hearth and the table's laid with a clean white cloth.

Second Workman. Go with him, lass, where the table is laid and the fire's alight.

Souhaun. Go lass, to the house on the hill, go while the door is open.

Avril. Let another go in by the door; let another eat at the table; let another sit by the fire. Why didn't you come for me, O'Killigain, before the young thorn tree had shed its blossom, and before the stems began to die?

O'Killigain. I'd other things to do. While you were livin' your lesser life, an' singin' your dowdy songs, I was fightin' in Spain that you might go on singin' in safety an' peace. [*He grips her arm.*] I've come for you now, me love.

Avril. [*Emotionally and anxious.*] I cannot go where things are said and things are done, for love has had no voice in the beginning of them! [*She tries to free her arm.*] Oh, Jack, let me go—you're hurting me!

O'Killigain. It's O'Killigain gives the pressure of comfort and of care. D'ye mind th' hurt when th' hurt's th' hurt of love?

Avril. [*Passionately.*] Yes, I do! Oh, no, no; I don't, O'Killigain! I don't, I don't. Your pressure on my arm presses on my heart, too. Oh, go away an' leave me lonely!

[*She breaks away and runs to SOUHAUN, who puts an arm around her.*]

Poges. [*Angrily.*] You've had your answers, both of you. Get going now. Be off to hell!

O'Killigain. Avril, come out of th' gutterin' candlelight here, to where the wind can put a flush on th' face, ruffle th' hair, and bring a catch to th' breath: come to th' one you want; come to the man who needs you!

Second Workman. [*To SOUHAUN.*] An' you, Souhaun, sturdy lily o' Clune na Geera, come into the love that can fix or flutter the stars o' th' sky, and change th' shinin' moon into a lamp for two. Come to th' one you need; come to th' man who wants you!

Souhaun. [*Half joking, but wholly in earnest.*] If you only had a horse handy, I'd ride away with you!

Second Workman. [*Quietly.*] He's outside waitin'. A loan from Mr O'Killigain. A horse that can gallop glorious the live-long day under th' sound of a steady voice an' the touch of a steady hand.

Souhaun. [*A little hysterical.*] No, no!

Second Workman. [*Firmly.*] Yes!

Basil. [*Rising out of his astonishment—to POGES, angrily.*] How long more are you going to stick this man? Send these impudent fellows away!

Poges. [*As if waking from a stupor—furiously to the two MEN.*] Get out, the two of you! We haven't lived long enough with you to be touched with your insanity! Get out!

Souhaun. [*To the SECOND WORKMAN.*] I see. I'll do whatever Avril advises, my friend. [*To AVRIL.*] Come, dear, till we think out a wonderful answer.

O'Killigain. [*To AVRIL—as she goes out.*] Be ready; I'll call and come to take you, Avril, when the river rises. [*He goes out.*]

Second Workman. [*To SOUHAUN—as she goes out.*] I'll wait outside by th' good, gallopin' horse, till th' snowy-breasted pearl comes to shimmer on me shoulder.

[*He goes out.*]

Poges. [*Furious and mocking.*] When the river rises! Come with me, and be my love! Come into the garden, Maud! Was ever fools more foolish!

Basil. And the fellow with the galloping horse outside! Boot, saddle, and away! I never expected to see or hear the like, even in this odd country. [*Slapping POGES on the back—jokingly.*] You'd better keep an eye on that woman of yours, and look out for the sound of a galloping horse!

Poges. [*Clapping BASIL on the back.*] And you keep an ear open for O'Killigain's

call when the river rises! [*In mock tragedy.*] Beware of O'Killigain's call!

Basil. [*Mocking.*] Beware the sound of the galloping horse! Did you hear that vulgar fellow chatting about making the moon do something or other?

[*POGES goes over to the bureau, opens a drawer, takes some papers out of it, looks at them, sits down at the bureau, and arranges things to write a letter.*]

Poges. Poor crazy fool. They're all a bit demented. Must be the climate. Most amusing.

Basil. Amusing, yes, up to a point; but hardly reassuring; no. [*He comes closer to POGES.*] I don't like it, POGES.

Poges. [*A little startled.*] Eh?

Basil. Well, it isn't exactly comfortable to be living among a lot of crazy people, is it? It may even become dangerous.

Poges. [*Sitting up straight.*] Dangerous? That's a serious thought, Stoke. Now that you mention it, I do feel the insidious influence of the place. We might become demented, too.

Basil. If they allowed us to live long enough.

Poges. Good God, what a thought! I must have a talk with you when I've written this letter.

Basil. You saw how the influence is even affecting the girls.

Poges. The girls? Oh, no, not the girls, man. They were just humouring the poor fools. Nonsense; not the girls.

Basil. You watch. Come up to our room when you're finished, will you?

Poges. At once. [*BASIL goes out; POGES shaking his head slowly from side to side—musingly.*] Erin the tear and the smile in thine eye!

[*He clears his throat with a cough, and settles down to write. The room becomes darker. He has hardly been writing a minute, when a curious face appears round the corner of the entrance leading to the Hall. It is the stout little face of a little man, dressed in neat black clothes covered with a saturated fawn-coloured mackintosh. Big spectacles cover his eyes. A huge, fiery red beard spreads over his chest, like a breastplate, reaching to his belly, and extending out from his body, like a fan turned downwards. He wears a black jerry hat. When he speaks he is found to have a little voice. He carries a blackthorn stick in his hand. As he peeps round he sees POGES at the bureau, and pulls in his head again. He thrusts*

it forward again, steps out, and comes into full view. He pulls his coat straight with a jerk and smooths his trousers; and then comes with a trot into the room, right over to POGES, bends over towards him, and greets him in a hearty manner. He is the SUB-POSTMASTER of the village.]

Postmaster. An honour it is, sir, to meet the owner of such a fine house. A house with a history. A house where the gentry joined themselves to merriment, and danced th' stars to sleep! [*He dances clumsily round the room, singing.*] See me dance the polka, see me dance the polka, see me dance the polka, as I have done before. [*He suddenly stops and comes to POGES.*] I hope I see you well, sir? I bear a message from the Postmaster.

Poges. [*Amazed.*] I am well, thank you; and what is your message from the Postmaster?

Postmaster. When I was outside, an' heard you coughin', it's well I knew be th' sound of th' cough that the cough was th' cough of a gentleman.

Poges. [*Impatiently.*] Yes, yes, but what is your message?

Postmaster. Well, as a genuine gentleman, you'll be th' first to agree that a Postmaster with a small wife an' a large family, an' hardly any salary—I near forgot to mention that—hardly any salary at all, if the thruth was told, as a thrue gentleman, you'll agree that a man like that is handicapped, an' has a claim on a gentleman's sympathy.

Poges. But I can't make his wife bigger, or his family smaller, can I?

Postmaster. Sure, I know you can't, an' that's not what the Postmaster's complainin' about. [*He leans over POGES.*] But th' poor man needs sleep, he needs his share o' sleep.

Poges. [*Humouring him—thinking his visitor is out of his mind.*] Yes, yes; of course, the poor man needs sleep. We all need sleep. That's a fine stick you have in your hand, sir: can I see it?

Postmaster. [*Holding up the stick and stretching it away from POGES.*] Ay, ay, a fine blackthorn. There y'are; look at it as long as you like; [*Warningly.*] —but don't lay a finger on it. There's a stick could give a crack a man ud remember!

Poges. [*Nervous.*] Oh? I can't see it well from here; let me take it in my hand for a moment.

Postmaster. Sorra second you're goin' to have it in your hand. That stick has never been outa me father's hand an' it has never been outa mine. D'ye know why?

Poges. No, friend, I don't.

Postmaster. Guess, now, guess.

Poges. [*Smiling sweetly.*] I haven't the slightest idea, friend; I couldn't guess.

Postmaster. This's th' very stick that me oul' fella made a swipe at Parnell with—th' scandaliser of Ireland's holy name, a swipe that, had it got home, ud a laid Parnell up for a month o' Sundays! Now, as a thrue gentleman, wouldn't you say it was right?

Poges. Yes, yes; quite right.

Postmaster. Well, havin' settled that, let's settle th' other; amnt I right in sayin' that every man should have his share o' sleep?

Poges. Yes, yes; of course.

Postmaster. Well, then, amnt I right in sayin' that th' poor Postmaster should have his share o' sleep, too?

Poges. To be sure. [*Rising from his seat.*] Now, I must be going.

[*A fairly loud clap of thunder is heard, followed by the sound, first of a trotting horse, then of one going off at a gallop. They listen till the sounds die in the distance.*]

Postmaster. [*Waving him back with the stick.*] Wait a minute—. I'm not done yet. You've just said the poor Postmaster should have his share o' sleep—didn't you?

Poges. Yes, yes, friend.

Postmaster. I knew you'd say that. [*He stretches out his hand to POGES.*] Lave it there. [*He shakes hands with POGES.*] Now I won't have to be keepin' one eye open an' me ear glued to the bell, for fear of a toll call or a trunk call, afther ten o'clock at night, an' I settlin' down for a cozy sleep.

Poges. [*The truth dawning on him.*] Oh, so you're the Postmaster, are you? So it was you who delayed me when I wanted St. Paul?

Postmaster. Didn't you know that?

Poges. The telephonic system here is an all-night one, isn't it?

Postmaster. 'Course it is, but that says nothin'.

Poges. [*Decidedly.*] Look here, my man; I'm a business man, and have to make calls at all hours of the night; I can't be thinking of every man having an honest night's sleep.

Postmaster. 'Course you can't; it's only the poor Postmaster that you've got to keep in mind.

Poges. [*Severely.*] Look here, my man, as long as I pay for the service, the service will have to be supplied. Good day.

Postmaster. There isn't a gentleman in th' whole districht ud think, except in the case o' sudden death or disasther, of givin' a

tinkle afther th' hand o' th' clock had passed the figure of half past nine o' night.

Poges. Take yourself and your stick away out of the house, man!

Postmaster. [*Mimicking him.*] Take yourself and your stick away outa the house, man. Is it comin' down here to teach us good manners an' feelin' y' are, an' you puttin' a surly gob on you when you're asked to fall in with the sensible an' thrived institutions of the neighbourhood?

[*While they have been talking together, the room has darkened still more, and POGES sharply tugs the string that puts on the light; the wind has risen and can be heard occasionally blowing through the trees outside; and even shaking the old house.*]

Poges. [*In a rage.*] Go on, get out!

[*As he says this, a long, loud peal of thunder is heard.*]

Postmaster. D'ye hear that? There won't be many thrunk calls goin' for a while, an' th' poor Postmaster'll have a sweeter night's sleep than some I know. [*He bends towards POGES.*] When—the river—rises!

[*The room has darkened; the wind rises; the one light in the room flickers. The POSTMASTER and POGES watch it. Then the POSTMASTER turns to go, but halts when a FIGURE of a man is seen standing at the entrance leading to the Hall. He is dressed from head to foot in gleaming black oilskins, hooded over his head, just giving a glimpse of a blue mask, all illumined by the rays of flickering lightning, so that the FIGURE seems to look like the spirit of the turbulent waters of the rising river. The POSTMASTER goes back, startled, till he is beside POGES, and the two men stand and stare at the ominous FIGURE. BASIL, BARNEY and CLOYNE appear at the entrances at back, each holding a lighted lantern in his and her hand. They are very frightened. They, too, hold up their lanterns and stare at the FIGURE.*]

Basil. The river is rising!

Barney. Risin' high!

Cloyne. An' will overwhelm us all!

The Figure. [*In a deep voice.*] The river has broken her banks, and is rising high; high enough to come tumbling in on top of you. Cattle, sheep, and swine are moaning in the whirling flood. Trees of an ancient heritage, that looked down on all below them, are torn from the power of the place they were born in, and are tossing about in

the foaming energy of the waters. Those who have lifted their eyes unto the hills are firm of foot, for in the hills is safety; but a trembling perch in the highest place on the highest house shall be the portion of those who dwell in the valleys below!

[The lightning ceases for a moment; the entrance becomes dark; and the FIGURE disappears.]

Poges. *[Frantic.]* What shall we do? What must we do? What can we do?

Basil. *[In anguish.]* We're lost!

Cloyne. *[Sinking down on her knees.]* King o' th' Angels, save us!

Barney. *[Clasping his hands.]* Amen! A nice pass we've come to when we have to call for help in a Tudor House!

Poges. *[Bawling.]* Souhaun, Souhaun! O'Killigain, help!

Basil. *[Roaring at POGES.]* You made us come down here!

Poges. *[Roaring at BASIL.]* You're a liar; it was you!

Postmaster. *[Bringing down the black-thorn stick with a bang on the quattro-cento bureau.]* Eh, order, order, law an' order there; steady! Measures o' safety to be taken. *[Thrusting his stick towards POGES—sharply.]* Has the highest room in the house a way to the roof—quick!

Poges. *[Answering at once.]* Yes.

Cloyne. *[In anguish.]* Th' roof—oh, my God!

Postmaster. *[Rapidly.]* Up with us all with bread and wine, with firewood and coal, and an axe. Up!

Poges. An axe?

Postmaster. To hack whatever suitable furniture we can get into a raft, if we're swirled off th' roof. *[Driving CLOYNE and BARNEY before him.]* Up!

Poges. *[Loudly.]* Souhaun, Souhaun, where's Souhaun?

Basil. *[Impatiently.]* Come on, and come up.

[AVRIL comes in from one of the back entrances. She is covered with a green mackintosh, and a coloured scarf, peasant-wise, is over her head. She carries a small case. She passes between the two MEN without a word, and stands still near the Entrance leading to the Hall, looking out before her.]

Poges. *[Staring at her.]* What are you doing here? What are you watching? *[AVRIL stands still and silent.]* Where's Souhaun, where's Souhaun?

Avril. *[Quietly—without looking round.]* She's gone.

Poges. Gone? How? Where?

Avril. *[Quietly—still not moving.]* Gone with the wind; gone with the waters; gone with the one man who alone saw something in her!

Poges. *[Raging.]* What, with that loud-mouthed, ignorant, superstitious, low-born, half-mad Irishman! Oh, she's nicely rooked me! She was with him on the galloping horse that galloped away, was she? Oh, she's nicely rooked a simple, honest, loving-hearted, foolish man! She's gone, is she?

Avril. An' well it would be if I was with her.

Poges. You damned slut, are you in your mind as bad as she is?

Avril. *[Indicating BASIL.]* The mind that went with him is as bad as the mind that went with you.

Basil. *[Sneeringly.]* You lost the chance you had to get away from it.

Avril. He said he'd come when the river rises.

O'Killigain. *[Outside—loudly.]* Avril.

Avril. *[With a start of joy.]* O'Killigain! O'Killigain!

[O'KILLIGAIN appears, his trench coat drenched and his hair soaking, at the entrance.]

O'Killigain. My barque is waiting, love; come!

[AVRIL picks up the case and runs to O'KILLIGAIN.]

Basil. Honest, decent woman, she carries the booty of her friends in her pack.

Avril. *[Quietly.]* I gave more than I got, you gilded monkey. It's winnowed of every touch of life I'd be if I stayed with th' waste of your mind much longer. *[She taps the case.]* Th' thinkets I wormed out of you are all here, an' here they stay, for th' wages were low for what was done for you.

Poges. *[Sneering.]* And gentleman O'Killigain will happier be with a harlot's fortune!

O'Killigain. *[Good-humouredly.]* Of course he will. Th' good things of this life are good for all, an' a pretty girl looks handsomer in my arms. You have had your day, like every dog. Your Tudors have had their day, and they are gone; and th' little heap o' purple dust they left behind them will vanish away in th' flow of the river. *[To AVRIL.]* Come, love, to my little house up on th' hill.

[He goes out with AVRIL. After a moment the sound of oars is heard splashing the waters, and O'KILLIGAIN is

*heard singing. Singing, other voices
outside join in the chorus.]*

Come from the dyin' an' fly from th' dead,
Faraway O!
An', now, with th' quick, make your home
an' your bed,
With a will an' a way, away O!

*[During song, BASIL runs off; comes
back with bags. Then rushes to POGES.]*

Then away, love, away,
Faraway O!
To live any life that is looming ahead,
With a will an' a way, away O!

Away from all mouldherin' ashes we row,
Faraway O!
Takin' th' splendour of livin' in tow,
With a will an' a way, away O!

Then away, love, away,
Faraway O!

Where th' lightning of life flashes vivid, we
go,

With a will an' a way, away O!

*[POGES stands still, listening till the
song fades away in the distance. Sudden-
ly BASIL clutches his arm.]*

Basil. [Frantically.] Wake up, man; wake
up! The waters are tumbling towards us.
What shall we do? Wake up! Come to the
roof! *[BASIL rushes off on the trail of the
others who have fled to the roof. As he
runs.]* The roof! The roof!

*[POGES stands still for a few moments,
then he sees the quattro-cento chest.
He stumbles over to it, raises the lid,
and climbs clumsily into it.]*

Poges. [Climbing in.] My poor little
quattro-cento be my ark in the midst of the
flood of waters. Bring me back, bring me
back to where I first saw the light. Bring
me back to dear old England now that
April's there.

*[He closes the lid on himself as the
waters surge around. Water falls on the
bureau as he descends.]*

CURTAIN

THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH *

By
THORNTON WILDER

IN HIS PREFACE TO "THREE PLAYS" (1957), Wilder explains how he came to write his kind of play. He says that toward the end of the twenties he found going to the theatre less and less pleasant, because he was losing belief in what he saw. He still believed the plays he read, but when he saw the same plays in the theatre they lacked bite or warmth. The explanation lay, he thought, in the 19th-century middle-class wish to avoid being disturbed in the theatre. The middle classes smothered the theatre's bite and warmth by means of the box set.

Wilder claims that the box set destroys belief in the theatre because it localizes what is universal in both place and time. The theatre, he believes, is by nature universal, a place where it is always "now," but the box set in the theatre makes it "then."

So Wilder began writing short plays impossible to do on box sets, plays in which time and space are treated so as to create the belief he wanted. In *The Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden* four chairs make an automobile and it goes seventy miles in twenty minutes. *The Long Christmas Dinner* spans ninety years. Then come longer plays: *Our Town* moves about the village of Grover's Corners and involves years of time; *The Merchant of Yonkers*, later revised as *The Matchmaker*, ridicules 19th-century plays; *The Skin of Our Teeth* compresses into one "now" thousands of years of human effort and endurance. *The Matchmaker* uses box sets, but perhaps Wilder does not care whether that play is believed. *A Life in the Sun*, also called *The Alcestiad*, was written for the open stage of the Assembly Hall at the Edinburgh Festival and when performed will apparently always ap-

pear on a similar stage. In sum, Wilder has done something, perhaps a great deal, to help banish box sets from the contemporary stage.

Wilder's audiences have become international, and surely no American playwright better represents America to non-Americans. But does Wilder's avoidance of box sets account for the convincingness of his plays? When the audience confronts the bare stage of *Our Town* or when the walls of the Antrobus home fly into the air, do Americans, Italians, Swiss, Germans say to themselves, "How true!"?

Maybe these methods gain belief in the theatre, but somehow it seems unlikely. Rather, Wilder's plays seem to place the responsibility for convincingness firmly upon the actor; they free him from setting, but they demand of him a prompt and assured authority, even such complicated and ambiguous authority as Sabina must exert at the beginning of *The Skin of Our Teeth*. If the audience feels that authority, it believes the play—in the only sense in which belief ever is found in the sophisticated audiences Wilder writes for: the willing acceptance of illusion. But surely those audiences, having accepted the illusion of Wilder's plays, do not refuse another author's illusion when they later meet it in a box set.

The Skin of Our Teeth had great difficulty finding a producer, but once produced it promptly succeeded, won a Pulitzer Prize for its author, and has remained one of the great plays of the American theatre, capable of frequent and always fresh revival. Wilder acknowledges that it owes a great deal to *Finnegans Wake*, by James Joyce, but since that book is perhaps the prime 20th-century instance of an unread classic, theatre audiences do not find *The Skin of Our Teeth's* theme, characterizations, or humor unbearably familiar.

* Reprinted by permission of Harper and Brothers.

THORNTON NIVEN WILDER

- Born 1897, Madison, Wisconsin. Elementary education at Berkeley and Ojai, California.
- 1906, Went with family to China, where his father served eight years as Consul General in Hong Kong and Shanghai. Attended school in Chefoo.
- 1915-1917, Attended Oberlin College.
- 1918, Corporal in Coast Artillery.
- 1920, A.B., Yale University.
- 1920-1921, Study in the American Academy in Rome, Italy.
- 1921-1928, Teacher of French and housemaster at The Lawrenceville School, New Jersey.
- 1925, M.A., Princeton University.
- 1927, His second novel, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, awarded the Pulitzer Prize.
- 1930-1937, Teaching English at the University of Chicago.
- 1938, *Our Town* awarded the Pulitzer Prize.
- 1942, *The Skin of Our Teeth* awarded the Pulitzer Prize.
- 1942, Enlisted in Air Corps Intelligence; appointed Lieutenant-Colonel in 1944.
- 1950, Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry at Harvard.

PLAYS

1919 *The Trumpet Shall Sound*. 1928 *The Angel That Troubled the Waters*, sixteen short plays. 1931 *The Long Christmas Dinner*, including besides the title play: *Queens of France*, *Pullman Car Hiawatha*, *Such Things Happen Only in Books*, *The Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden*, *Love and How to Cure It*. 1932 *Lucrece*, translated from the French of Obey. 1938 *Our Town*. 1938 *The Merchant of Yonkers*, translated and adapted from *Einen Jux will er sich machen*, by Nestroy, based on *A Day Well Spent* (1836), by John Oxenford. 1942 *The Skin of Our Teeth*. 1947 *Our Century*. 1948 *The Victors*, translated from *Morts sans sépulture*, by Jean-Paul Sartre. 1954 *The*

Matchmaker, revision of *The Merchant of Yonkers*. 1955 *A Life in the Sun* (*The Alcestiad*). 1957 *The Drunken Sisters*. 1957 *Bernice*. 1957 *The Wreck of the 5:25*.

SCREENWRITING

1928 *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*.

WRITINGS ON DRAMA

"Some Thoughts on Playwriting," in *The Intent of the Artist*, edited by Augusto Cenneto, 1941. Preface to *Three Plays*, 1957; reprinted, slightly expanded, as "A Platform and a Passion or Two," in *Harper's Magazine*, CCXV (Oct. 1957), 48-51.

THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH

Characters

(in the order of their appearance)

ANNOUNCER.

SABINA.

MR. FITZPATRICK.

MRS. ANTROBUS.

DINOSAUR.

MAMMOTH.

TELEGRAPH BOY.

GLADYS.

HENRY.

MR. ANTROBUS.

DOCTOR.

PROFESSOR.

JUDGE [MOSES].

HOMER.

MISS E. MUSE.

MISS T. MUSE.

MISS M. MUSE.

TWO USHERS.

TWO DRUM MAJORETTES.

FORTUNE TELLER.

TWO CHAIR PUSHERS.

SIX CONVEENERS.

BROADCAST OFFICIAL.

DEFEATED CANDIDATE.

MR. TREMAYNE.

HESTER.

IVY.

FRED BAILEY.

ACT I. *Home, Excelsior, New Jersey.*

ACT II. *Atlantic City Boardwalk.*

ACT III. *Home, Excelsior, New Jersey.*

ACT I

A projection screen in the middle of the curtain. The first lantern slide: the name of the theatre, and the words: NEWS EVENTS OF THE WORLD. An ANNOUNCER'S voice is heard.

Announcer. The management takes pleasure in bringing to you—The News Events of the World. [*Slide of the sun appearing above the horizon.*]

Freeport, Long Island:

The sun rose this morning at 6:32 a.m. This gratifying event was first reported by Mrs. Dorothy Stetson of Freeport, Long Island, who promptly telephoned the Mayor.

The Society for Affirming the End of the World at once went into a special session and postponed the arrival of that event for TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.

All honor to Mrs. Stetson for her public spirit.

New York City: [*Slide of the front doors of the theatre in which this play is playing; three cleaning WOMEN with mops and pails.*]

The X Theatre. During the daily cleaning of this theatre a number of lost objects were collected as usual by Mesdames Simpson, Pateslewski, and Moriarty.

Among these objects found today was a wedding ring, inscribed: *To Eva from Adam. Genesis II: 18.*

The ring will be restored to the owner or owners, if their credentials are satisfactory.

Tippehatchee, Vermont: [*Slide representing a glacier.*] The unprecedented cold weather of this summer has produced a condition that has not yet been satisfactorily explained. There is a report that a wall of ice is moving southward across these counties. The disruption of communications by the cold wave now crossing the country has rendered exact information difficult, but little credence is given to the rumor that the ice had pushed the Cathedral of Montreal as far as St. Albans, Vermont.

For further information see your daily papers.

Excelsior, New Jersey: [*Slide of a modest suburban home.*] The home of Mr. George Antrobus, the inventor of the wheel. The discovery of the wheel, following so closely on the discovery of the lever, has centered the attention of the country on Mr. Antrobus of this attractive suburban residence district. This is his home, a commodious seven-room house, conveniently situated near a public school, a Methodist church, and a firehouse; it is right handy to an A. and P. [*Slide of MR. ANTROBUS on his front steps, smiling and lifting his straw hat. He holds a wheel.*] Mr. Antrobus, himself. He comes of very old stock and has made his way up from next to nothing.

It is reported that he was once a gardener, but left that situation under circumstances that have been variously reported.

Mr. Antrobus is a veteran of foreign wars, and bears a number of scars, front and back. [*Slide of MRS. ANTROBUS, holding some roses.*] This is Mrs. Antrobus, the charming and gracious president of the Excelsior Mothers' Club.

Mrs. Antrobus is an excellent needlewoman; it is she who invented the apron on which so many interesting changes have been rung since. [*Slide of the FAMILY and SABINA.*] Here we see the Antrobuses with their two children, Henry and Gladys, and friend. The friend in the rear, is Lily Sabina, the maid.

I know we all want to congratulate this typical American family on its enterprise. We all wish Mr. Antrobus a successful future. Now the management takes you to the interior of this home for a brief visit.

[*Curtain rises. Living room of a commuter's home. SABINA—straw-blonde, over-rouged—is standing by the window back center, a feather duster under her elbow.*]

Sabina. Oh, oh, oh! Six o'clock and the master not home yet.

Pray God nothing serious has happened to him crossing the Hudson River. If anything happened to him, we would certainly be inconsolable and have to move into a less desirable residence district.

The fact is I don't know what'll become of us. Here it is the middle of August and the coldest day of the year. It's simply freezing;

the dogs are sticking to the sidewalks; can anybody explain that? No.

But I'm not surprised. The whole world's at sixes and sevens, and why the house hasn't fallen down about our ears long ago is a miracle to me. [*A fragment of the right wall leans precariously over the stage. SABINA looks at it nervously and it slowly rights itself.*] Every night this same anxiety as to whether the master will get home safely: whether he'll bring home anything to eat. In the midst of life we are in the midst of death, a truer word was never said. [*The fragment of scenery flies up into the lofts. SABINA is struck dumb with surprise, shrugs her shoulders and starts dusting MR. ANTROBUS' chair, including the under side.*] Of course, Mr. Antrobus is a very fine man, an excellent husband and father, a pillar of the church, and has all the best interests of the community at heart. Of course, every muscle goes tight every time he passes a policeman; but what I think is that there are certain charges that ought not to be made, and I think I may add, ought not to be allowed to be made; we're all human; who isn't? [*She dusts MRS. ANTROBUS' rocking chair.*] Mrs. Antrobus is as fine a woman as you could hope to see. She lives only for her children; and if it would be any benefit to her children she'd see the rest of us stretched out dead at her feet without turning a hair,—that's the truth. If you want to know anything more about Mrs. Antrobus, just go and look at a tigress, and look hard.

As to the children—

Well, Henry Antrobus is a real, clean-cut American boy. He'll graduate from High School one of these days, if they make the alphabet any easier.—Henry, when he has a stone in his hand, has a perfect aim; he can hit anything from a bird to an older brother—Oh! I didn't mean to say that!—but it certainly was an unfortunate accident, and it was very hard getting the police out of the house.

Mr. and Mrs. Antrobus' daughter is named Gladys. She'll make some good man a good wife some day, if he'll just come down off the movie screen and ask her.

So here we are!

We've managed to survive for some time now, catch as catch can, the fat and the lean, and if the dinosaurs don't trample us to death, and if the grasshoppers don't eat up our garden, we'll all live to see better days, knock on wood.

Each new child that's born to the Antrobuses seems to them to be sufficient reason for the whole universe's being set in motion;

and each new child that dies seems to them to have been spared a whole world of sorrow, and what the end of it will be is still very much an open question.

We've rattled along, hot and cold, for some time now—[*A portion of the wall above the door, right, flies up into the air and disappears.*]—and my advice to you is not to inquire into why or whither, but just enjoy your ice cream while it's on your plate,—that's my philosophy.

Don't forget that a few years ago we came through the depression by the skin of our teeth! One more tight squeeze like that and where will we be?

[*This is a cue line. SABINA looks angrily at the kitchen door and repeats.*] . . . we came through the depression by the skin of our teeth; one more tight squeeze like that and where will we be?

[*Flustered, she looks through the opening in the right wall; then goes to the window and reopens the Act.*] Oh, oh, oh! Six o'clock and the master not home yet. Pray God nothing has happened to him crossing the Hudson. Here it is the middle of August and the coldest day of the year. It's simply freezing; the dogs are sticking. One more tight squeeze like that and where will we be?

Voice. [Offstage.] Make up something! Invent something!

Sabina. Well . . . uh . . . this certainly is a fine American home . . . and—uh . . . everybody's very happy . . . and—uh . . . [*Suddenly flings pretense to the winds and coming downstage says with indignation.*] I can't invent any words for this play, and I'm glad I can't. I hate this play and every word in it.

As for me, I don't understand a single word of it, anyway,—all about the troubles the human race has gone through, there's a subject for you.

Besides, the author hasn't made up his silly mind as to whether we're all living back in caves or in New Jersey today, and that's the way it is all the way through.

Oh—why can't we have plays like we used to have—*Peg o' My Heart*, and *Smilin' Thru*, and *The Bat*—good entertainment with a message you can take home with you?

I took this hateful job because I had to. For two years I've sat up in my room living on a sandwich and a cup of tea a day, waiting for better things in the theatre. And look at me now: I—I who've played *Rain* and *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* and *First Lady*—God in Heaven!

[*The STAGE MANAGER puts his head out from the hole in the scenery.*]

Mr. Fitzpatrick. Miss Somerset!! Miss Somerset!

Sabina. Oh! Anyway—nothing matters! It'll all be the same in a hundred years. [*Loudly.*] We came through the depression by the skin of our teeth,—that's true!—one more tight squeeze like that and where will we be? [*Enter MRS. ANTROBUS, a mother.*]

Mrs. Antrobus. Sabina, you've let the fire go out.

Sabina. [*In a lather.*] One-thing-and-another; don't-know-whether-my-wits-are-up-side-or-down; might-as-well-be-dead-as-alive-in-a-house-all-sixes-and-sevens. . . .

Mrs. Antrobus. You've let the fire go out. Here it is the coldest day of the year right in the middle of August, and you've let the fire go out.

Sabina. Mrs. Antrobus, I'd like to give my two weeks' notice, Mrs. Antrobus. A girl like I can get a situation in a home where they're rich enough to have a fire in every room, Mrs. Antrobus, and a girl don't have to carry the responsibility of the whole house on her two shoulders. And a home without children, Mrs. Antrobus, because children are a thing only a parent can stand, and a truer word was never said; and a home, Mrs. Antrobus, where the master of the house don't pinch decent, self-respecting girls when he meets them in a dark corridor. I mention no names and make no charges. So you have my notice, Mrs. Antrobus. I hope that's perfectly clear.

Mrs. Antrobus. You've let the fire go out!—Have you milked the mammoth?

Sabina. I don't understand a word of this play.—Yes, I've milked the mammoth.

Mrs. Antrobus. Until Mr. Antrobus comes home we have no food and we have no fire. You'd better go over to the neighbors and borrow some fire.

Sabina. Mrs. Antrobus! I can't! I'd die on the way, you know I would. It's worse than January. The dogs are sticking to the sidewalks. I'd die.

Mrs. Antrobus. Very well, I'll go.

Sabina. [*Even more distraught, coming forward and sinking on her knees.*] You'd never come back alive; we'd all perish; if you weren't here, we'd just perish. How do we know Mr. Antrobus'll be back? We don't know. If you go out, I'll just kill myself.

Mrs. Antrobus. Get up, Sabina.

Sabina. Every night it's the same thing. Will he come back safe, or won't he? Will we starve to death, or freeze to death, or boil

to death or will we be killed by burglars? I don't know why we go on living. I don't know why we go on living at all. It's easier being dead.

[She flings her arms on the table and buries her head in them. In each of the succeeding speeches she flings her head up—and sometimes her hands—then quickly buries her head again.]

Mrs. Antrobus. The same thing! Always throwing up the sponge, Sabina. Always announcing your own death. But give you a new hat—or a plate of ice cream—or a ticket to the movies, and you want to live forever.

Sabina. You don't care whether we live or die; all you care about is those children. If it would be any benefit to them you'd be glad to see us all stretched out dead.

Mrs. Antrobus. Well, maybe I would.

Sabina. And what do they care about? Themselves—that's all they care about. *[Shrilly.]* They make fun of you behind your back. Don't tell me: they're ashamed of you. Half the time, they pretend they're someone else's children. Little thanks you get from them.

Mrs. Antrobus. I'm not asking for any thanks.

Sabina. And Mr. Antrobus—you don't understand him. All that work he does—trying to discover the alphabet and the multiplication table. Whenever he tries to learn anything you fight against it.

Mrs. Antrobus. Oh, Sabina, I know you.

When Mr. Antrobus raped you home from your Sabine hills, he did it to insult me.

He did it for your pretty face, and to insult me.

You were the new wife, weren't you?

For a year or two you lay on your bed all day and polished the nails on your hands and feet.

You made puff-balls of the combings of your hair and you blew them up to the ceiling.

And I washed your underclothes and I made you chicken broths.

I bore children and between my very groans I stirred the cream that you'd put on your face.

But I knew you wouldn't last.

You didn't last.

Sabina. But it was I who encouraged Mr. Antrobus to make the alphabet. I'm sorry to say it, Mrs. Antrobus, but you're not a beautiful woman, and you can never know what a man could do if he tried. It's girls like I who inspire the multiplication table.

I'm sorry to say it, but you're not a beau-

tiful woman, Mrs. Antrobus, and that's the God's truth.

Mrs. Antrobus. And you didn't last—you sank to the kitchen. And what do you do there? *You let the fire go out!*

No wonder to you it seems easier being dead.

Reading and writing and counting on your fingers is all very well in their way,—but I keep the home going.—There's that dinosaur on the front lawn again.—Shoo! Go away. Go away.

[The baby DINOSAUR puts his head in the window.]

Dinosaur. It's cold.

Mrs. Antrobus. You go around to the back of the house where you belong.

Dinosaur. It's cold.

[The DINOSAUR disappears. MRS. ANTROBUS goes calmly out. SABINA slowly raises her head and speaks to the audience. The central portion of the center wall rises, pauses, and disappears into the loft.]

Sabina. Now that you audience are listening to this, too, I understand it a little better.

I wish eleven o'clock were here; I don't want to be dragged through this whole play again. *[The TELEGRAPH BOY is seen entering along the back wall of the stage from the right. She catches sight of him and calls.]* Mrs. Antrobus! Mrs. Antrobus! Help! There's a strange man coming to the house. He's coming up the walk, help!

[Enter MRS. ANTROBUS in alarm, but efficient.]

Mrs. Antrobus. Help me quick! *[They barricade the door by piling the furniture against it.]* Who is it? What do you want?

Telegraph Boy. A telegram for Mrs. Antrobus from Mr. Antrobus in the city.

Sabina. Are you sure, are you sure? Maybe it's just a trap!

Mrs. Antrobus. I know his voice, Sabina. We can open the door. *[Enter the TELEGRAPH BOY, 12 years old, in uniform. The DINOSAUR and MAMMOTH slip by him into the room and settle down front right.]* I'm sorry we kept you waiting. We have to be careful, you know. *[To the ANIMALS.]* Hm! . . . Will you be quiet? *[They nod.]*

Have you had your supper? *[They nod.]*

Are you ready to come in? *[They nod.]*

Young man, have you any fire with you? Then light the grate, will you?

[He nods, produces something like a briquet; and kneels by the imagined fireplace, footlights center. Pause.]

What are people saying about this cold weather? *[He makes a doubtful shrug with*

his shoulders.] Sabina, take this stick and go and light the stove.

Sabina. Like I told you, Mrs. Antrobus; two weeks. That's the law. I hope that's perfectly clear. [Exit.]

Mrs. Antrobus. What about this cold weather?

Telegraph Boy. [Lowered eyes.] Of course, I don't know anything . . . but they say there's a wall of ice moving down from the North, that's what they say. We can't get Boston by telegraph, and they're burning pianos in Hartford.

. . . It moves everything in front of it, churches and post offices and city halls.

I live in Brooklyn myself.

Mrs. Antrobus. What are people doing about it?

Telegraph Boy. Well . . . uh . . . Talk-
ing, mostly.

Or just what you'd do a day in February.

There are some that are trying to go South and the roads are crowded; but you can't take old people and children very far in a cold like this.

Mrs. Antrobus. What's this telegram you have for me?

Telegraph Boy. [Fingertips to his forehead.] If you wait just a minute; I've got to remember it. [The ANIMALS have left their corner and are nosing him. Presently they take their places on either side of him, leaning against his hips, like heraldic beasts.]

This telegram was flashed from Murray Hill to University Heights! And then by puffs of smoke from University Heights to Staten Island. And then by lantern from Staten Island to Plainfield, New Jersey. What hath God wrought!

[He clears his throat.]

"To Mrs. Antrobus, Excelsior, New Jersey:

My dear wife, will be an hour late. Busy day at the office. Don't worry the children about the cold just keep them warm burn everything except Shakespeare." [Pause.]

Mrs. Antrobus. Men! —He knows I'd burn ten Shakespeares to prevent a child of mine from having one cold in the head. What does it say next? [Enter SABINA.]

Telegraph Boy. "Have made great discoveries today have separated em from en."

Sabina. I know what that is, that's the alphabet, yes it is. Mr. Antrobus is just the cleverest man. Why, when the alphabet's finished, we'll be able to tell the future and everything.

Telegraph Boy. Then listen to this: "Ten tens make a hundred semi-colon consequences

far-reaching." [Watches for effect.]

Mrs. Antrobus. The earth's turning to ice, and all he can do is to make up new numbers.

Telegraph Boy. Well, Mrs. Antrobus, like the head man at our office said: a few more discoveries like that and we'll be worth freezing.

Mrs. Antrobus. What does he say next?

Telegraph Boy. I . . . I can't do this last part very well. [He clears his throat and sings.] "Happy w'dding ann'vers'ry to you, Happy ann'vers'ry to you——"

[The ANIMALS begin to howl soulfully; SABINA screams with pleasure.]

Mrs. Antrobus. Dolly! Frederick! Be quiet.

Telegraph Boy. [Above the din.] "Happy w'dding ann'vers'ry, dear Eva; happy w'dding ann'vers'ry to you."

Mrs. Antrobus. Is that in the telegram? Are they singing telegrams now? [He nods.] The earth's getting so silly no wonder the sun turns cold.

Sabina. Mrs. Antrobus, I want to take back the notice I gave you. Mrs. Antrobus, I don't want to leave a house that gets such interesting telegrams and I'm sorry for anything I said. I really am.

Mrs. Antrobus. Young man, I'd like to give you something for all this trouble; Mr. Antrobus isn't home yet and I have no money and no food in the house——

Telegraph Boy. Mrs. Antrobus . . . I don't like to . . . appear to . . . ask for anything, but . . .

Mrs. Antrobus. What is it you'd like?

Telegraph Boy. Do you happen to have an old needle you could spare? My wife just sits home all day thinking about needles.

Sabina. [Shrilly.] We only got two in the house. Mrs. Antrobus, you know we only got two in the house.

Mrs. Antrobus. [After a look at SABINA, taking a needle from her collar.] Why yes, I can spare this.

Telegraph Boy. [Lowered eyes.] Thank you, Mrs. Antrobus. Mrs. Antrobus, can I ask you something else? I have two sons of my own; if the cold gets worse, what should I do?

Sabina. I think we'll all perish, that's what I think. Cold like this in August is just the end of the whole world. [Silence.]

Mrs. Antrobus. I don't know. After all, what does one do about anything? Just keep as warm as you can. And don't let your wife and children see that you're worried.

Telegraph Boy. Yes. . . . Thank you, Mrs. Antrobus. We'll, I'd better be going. —Oh, I forgot! There's one more sentence

in the telegram. "Three cheers have invented the wheel."

Mrs. Antrobus. A wheel? What's a wheel?

Telegraph Boy. I don't know. That's what it said. The sign for it is like this. Well, goodbye.

[The WOMEN see him to the door, with goodbyes and injunctions to keep warm.]

Sabina. *[Apron to her eyes, wailing.]* Mrs. Antrobus, it looks to me like all the nice men in the world are already married; I don't know why that is. *[Exit.]*

Mrs. Antrobus. *[Thoughtful; to the ANIMALS.]* Do you ever remember hearing tell of any cold like this in August? *[The ANIMALS shake their heads.]* From your grandmothers or anyone? *[They shake their heads.]* Have you any suggestions? *[They shake their heads. She pulls her shawl around, goes to the front door and opening it an inch calls.]* HENRY. GLADYS. CHILDREN. Come right in and get warm. No, no, when mama says a thing she means it. Henry! HENRY. Put down that stone. You know what happened last time. *[Shriek.]* HENRY! Put down that stone! Gladys! Put down your dress!! Try and be a lady.

[The CHILDREN bound in and dash to the fire. They take off their winter things and leave them in heaps on the floor.]

Gladys. Mama, I'm hungry. Mama, why is it so cold?

Henry. *[At the same time.]* Mama, why doesn't it snow? Mama, when's supper ready? Maybe it'll snow and we can make snowballs.

Gladys. Mama, it's so cold that in one more minute I just couldn't of stood it.

Mrs. Antrobus. Settle down, both of you, I want to talk to you. *[She draws up a hassock and sits front center over the orchestra pit before the imaginary fire. The CHILDREN stretch out on the floor, leaning against her lap. Tableau by Raphael. The ANIMALS edge up and complete the triangle.]* It's just a cold spell of some kind. Now listen to what I'm saying.

When your father comes home I want you to be extra quiet. He's had a hard day at the office and I don't know but what he may have one of his moods.

I just got a telegram from him very happy and excited, and you know what that means. Your father's temper's uneven; I guess you know that. *[Shriek.]* HENRY! HENRY!

Why—why can't you remember to keep your hair down over your forehead? You must keep that scar covered up. Don't you know that when your father sees it he loses

all control over himself? He goes crazy. He wants to die. *[After a moment's despair she collects herself decisively, wets the hem of her apron in her mouth and starts polishing his forehead vigorously.]* Lift your head up. Stop squirming. Blessed me, sometimes I think that it's going away—and then there it is: just as red as ever.

Henry. Mama, today at school two teachers forgot and called me by my old name. They forgot, Mama. You'd better write another letter to the principal, so that he'll tell them I've changed my name. Right out in class they called me: Cain.

Mrs. Antrobus. *[Putting her hand on his mouth, too late; hoarsely.]* Don't say it. *[Polishing feverishly.]* If you're good they'll forget it. Henry, you didn't hit anyone . . . today, did you?

Henry. Oh . . . no-o-o!

Mrs. Antrobus. *[Still working, not looking at GLADYS.]* And, Gladys, I want you to be especially nice to your father tonight. You know what he calls you when you're good—his little angel, his little star. Keep your dress down like a little lady. And keep your voice nice and low. Gladys Antrobus!! What's that red stuff you have on your face? *[Slaps her.]* You're a filthy detestable child! *[Rises in real, though temporary, repudiation and despair.]* Get away from me, both of you! I wish I'd never seen sight or sound of you. Let the cold come! I can't stand it. I don't want to go on.

[She walks away.]

Gladys. *[Weeping.]* All the girls at school do, Mama.

Mrs. Antrobus. *[Shrieking.]* I'm through with you, that's all!—Sabina! Sabina!—Don't you know your father'd go crazy if he saw that paint on your face? Don't you know your father thinks you're perfect? Don't you know he couldn't live if he didn't think you were perfect?—Sabina! *[Enter SABINA.]*

Sabina. Yes, Mrs. Antrobus!

Mrs. Antrobus. Take this girl out into the kitchen and wash her face with the scrubbing brush.

Mr. Antrobus. *[Outside, roaring.]* "I've been working on the railroad, all the livelong day . . ." etc.

[The ANIMALS start running around in circles, bellowing. SABINA rushes to the window.]

Mrs. Antrobus. Sabina, what's that noise outside?

Sabina. Oh, it's a drunken tramp. It's a giant, Mrs. Antrobus. We'll all be killed in our beds, I know it!

Mrs. Antrobus. Help me quick. Quick.

Everybody. [*Again they stack all the furniture against the door. MR. ANTROBUS pounds and bellows.*] Who is it? What do you want?—Sabina, have you any boiling water ready?—Who is it?

Mr. Antrobus. Broken-down camel of a pig's snout, open this door.

Mrs. Antrobus. God be praised! It's your father.—Just a minute, George!—Sabina, clear the door, quick. Gladys, come here while I clean your nasty face!

Mr. Antrobus. She-bitch of a goat's gizzard, I'll break every bone in your body. Let me in or I'll tear the whole house down.

Mrs. Antrobus. Just a minute, George, something's the matter with the lock.

Mr. Antrobus. Open the door or I'll tear your liver out. I'll smash your brains on the ceiling, and Devil take the hindmost.

Mrs. Antrobus. Now, you can open the door, Sabina. I'm ready.

[*The door is flung open. Silence. MR. ANTROBUS—face of a Keystone Comedy Cop—stands there in fur cap and blanket. His arms are full of parcels, including a large stone wheel with a center in it. One hand carries a railroad man's lantern. Suddenly he bursts into joyous roar.*]

Mr. Antrobus. Well, how's the whole crooked family? [*Relief. Laughter. Tears. Jumping up and down. ANIMALS cavorting. ANTROBUS throws the parcels on the ground. Hurls his cap and blanket after them. Heroic embraces. Melee of HUMANS and ANIMALS, SABINA included.*] I'll be scalded and tarred if a man can't get a little welcome when he comes home. Well, Maggie, you old gunnysack, how's the broken down old weather hen?—Sabina, old fishbait, old skunkpot.—And the children,—how've the little smellers been?

Gladys. Papa, Papa, Papa, Papa, Papa.

Mr. Antrobus. How've they been, Maggie?

Mrs. Antrobus. Well, I must say they've been as good as gold. I haven't had to raise my voice once. I don't know what's the matter with them.

Antrobus. [*Kneeling before GLADYS.*] Papa's little weasel, eh?—Sabina, there's some food for you.—Papa's little gopher?

Gladys. [*Her arm around his neck.*] Papa, you're always teasing me.

Antrobus. And Henry? Nothing rash today, I hope. Nothing rash?

Henry. No, Papa.

Antrobus. [*Roaring.*] Well that's good, that's good—I'll bet Sabina let the fire go out.

Sabina. Mr. Antrobus, I've given my no-

tice. I'm leaving two weeks from today. I'm sorry, but I'm leaving.

Antrobus. [*Roar.*] Well, if you leave now you'll freeze to death, so go and cook the dinner.

Sabina. Two weeks, that's the law. [*Exit.*]

Antrobus. Did you get my telegram?

Mrs. Antrobus. Yes.—What's a wheel?

[*He indicates the wheel with a glance.*

HENRY is rolling it around the floor.

Rapid, hoarse interchange: MRS. AN-

TROBUS: What does this cold weather

mean? It's below freezing. ANTROBUS:

Not before the children! MRS. AN-

TROBUS: Shouldn't we do something about

it?—start off, move? ANTROBUS: Not

before the children!!! He gives HENRY

a sharp slap.]

Henry. Papa, you hit me!

Antrobus. Well, remember it. That's to make you remember today. Today. The day the alphabet's finished; and the day that we saw the hundred—the hundred, the hundred, the hundred, the hundred, the hundred, the hundred—there's no end to 'em.

I've had a day at the office!

Take a look at that wheel, Maggie—when I've got that to rights: you'll see a sight.

There's a reward there for all the walking you've done.

Mrs. Antrobus. How do you mean?

Antrobus. [*On the hassock looking into the fire; with awe.*] Maggie, we've reached the top of the wave. There's not much more to be done. We're there!

Mrs. Antrobus. [*Cutting across his mood sharply.*] And the ice?

Antrobus. The ice!

Henry. [*Playing with the wheel.*] Papa, you could put a chair on this.

Antrobus. [*Broodingly.*] Ye-e-s, any booby can fool with it now,—but I thought of it first.

Mrs. Antrobus. Children, go out in the kitchen. I want to talk to your father alone.

[*The CHILDREN go out. ANTROBUS has moved his chair up left. He takes the goldfish bowl on his lap; pulls the canary cage down to the level of his face. Both the ANIMALS put their paws up on the arms of his chair. MRS. ANTROBUS faces him across the room, like a judge.*]

Mrs. Antrobus. Well?

Antrobus. [*Shortly.*] It's cold.—How things been, eh? Keck, keck, keck.—And you, Millicent?

Mrs. Antrobus. I know it's cold.

Antrobus. [*To the canary.*] No spilling of sunflower seed, eh? No singing after lights-out, y'know what I mean?

Mrs. Antrobus. You can try and prevent us freezing to death, can't you? You can do something? We can start moving. Or can we go on the animals' backs?

Antrobus. The best thing about animals is that they don't talk much.

Mammoth. It's cold.

Antrobus. Eh, eh, eh! Watch that!—

—By midnight we'd turn to ice. The roads are full of people now who can scarcely lift a foot from the ground. The grass out in front is like iron,—which reminds me, I have another needle for you.—The people up north—where are they? Frozen . . . crushed. . .

Mrs. Antrobus. Is that what's going to happen to us?—Will you answer me?

Antrobus. I don't know. I don't know anything. Some say that the ice is going slower. Some say that it's stopped. The sun's growing cold. What can I do about that? Nothing we can do but burn everything in the house, and the fenceposts and the barn. Keep the fire going. When we have no more fire, we die.

Mrs. Antrobus. Well, why didn't you say so in the first place?

[She is about to march off when she catches sight of two REFUGEES, men, who have appeared against the back wall of the stage and who are soon joined by others.]

Refugees. Mr. Antrobus! Mr. Antrobus! Mr. An-n-tro-bus!

Mrs. Antrobus. Who's that? Who's that calling you?

Antrobus. *[Clearing his throat guiltily.]* Hm—let me see.

[Two REFUGEES come up to the window.]

Refugee. Could we warm our hands for a moment, Mr. Antrobus? It's very cold, Mr. Antrobus.

Another Refugee. Mr. Antrobus, I wonder if you have a piece of bread or something that you could spare.

[Silence. They wait humbly. MRS. ANTROBUS stands rooted to the spot. Suddenly a knock at the door, then another hand knocking in short rapid blows.]

Mrs. Antrobus. Who are these people? Why, they're all over the front yard. What have they come here for? *[Enter SABINA.]*

Sabina. Mrs. Antrobus! There are some tramps knocking at the back door.

Mrs. Antrobus. George, tell these people to go away. Tell them to move right along. I'll go and send them away from the back door. Sabina, come with me.

[She goes out energetically.]

Antrobus. Sabina! Stay here! I have

something to say to you. *[He goes to the door and opens it a crack and talks through it.]* Ladies and gentlemen! I'll have to ask you to wait a few minutes longer. It'll be all right . . . while you're waiting you might each one pull up a stake of the fence. We'll need them all for the fireplace. There'll be coffee and sandwiches in a moment.

[SABINA looks out door over his shoulder and suddenly extends her arm pointing, with a scream.]

Sabina. Mr. Antrobus, what's that??—that big white thing? Mr. Antrobus, it's ICE. It's ICE!!

Antrobus. Sabina, I want you to go in the kitchen and make a lot of coffee. Make a whole pail full.

Sabina. Pail full!!

Antrobus. *[With gesture.]* And sandwiches . . . piles of them . . . like this.

Sabina. Mr. An . . . !! *[Suddenly she drops the play, and says in her own person as MISS SOMERSET, with surprise.]* Oh, I see what this part of the play means now! This means refugees. *[She starts to cross the proscenium.]* Oh, I don't like it. I don't like it.

[She leans against the proscenium and bursts into tears.]

Antrobus. Miss Somerset!

Voice of the Stage Manager. Miss Somerset!

Sabina. *[Energetically, to the audience.]* Ladies and gentlemen! Don't take this play serious. The world's not coming to an end. You know it's not. People exaggerate! Most people really have enough to eat and a roof over their heads. Nobody actually starves—you can always eat grass or something. That ice-business—why, it was a long, long time ago. Besides they were only savages. Savages don't love their families—not like we do.

Antrobus and Stage Manager. Miss Somerset!!

[There is renewed knocking at the door.]

Sabina. All right. I'll say the lines, but I won't think about the play.

[Enter MRS. ANTROBUS.]

Sabina. *[Parting thrust at the audience.]* And I advise you not to think about the play, either. *[Exit SABINA.]*

Mrs. Antrobus. George, these tramps say that you asked them to come to the house. What does this mean?

[Knocking at the door.]

Antrobus. Just . . . uh . . . These are a few friends, Maggie, I met on the road. Real nice, real useful people. . . .

Mrs. Antrobus. *[Back to the door.]* Now,

don't you ask them in! George Antrobus, not another soul comes in here over my dead body.

Antrobus. Maggie, there's a doctor there. Never hurts to have a good doctor in the house. We've lost a peck of children, one way and another. You can never tell when a child's throat will get stopped up. What you and I have seen——!!!

[*He puts his fingers on his throat, and imitates diphtheria.*]

Mrs. Antrobus. Well, just one person then, the Doctor. The others can go right along the road.

Antrobus. Maggie, there's an old man, particular friend of mine——

Mrs. Antrobus. I won't listen to you——
Antrobus. It was he that really started off the A.B.C.'s.

Mrs. Antrobus. I don't care if he perishes. We can do without reading or writing. We can't do without food.

Antrobus. Then let the ice come!! Drink your coffee!! I don't want any coffee if I can't drink it with some good people.

Mrs. Antrobus. Stop shouting. Who else is there trying to push us off the cliff?

Antrobus. Well, there's the man . . . who makes all the laws. Judge Moses!

Mrs. Antrobus. Judges can't help us now.

Antrobus. And if the ice melts? . . . and if we pull through? Have you and I been able to bring up Henry? What have we done?

Mrs. Antrobus. Who are those old women?

Antrobus. [*Coughs.*] Up in town there are nine sisters. There are three or four of them here. They're sort of music teachers . . . and one of them recites and one of them——

Mrs. Antrobus. That's the end. A singing troupe! Well, take your choice, live or die. Starve your own children before your face.

Antrobus. [*Gently.*] These people don't take much. They're used to starving. They'll sleep on the floor. Besides, Maggie, listen: no, listen: Who've we got in the house, but Sabina? Sabina's always afraid the worst will happen. Whose spirits can she keep up? Maggie, these people never give up. They think they'll live and work forever.

Mrs. Antrobus. [*Walks slowly to the middle of the room.*] All right, let them in. You're master here. [*Softly.*]—But these animals must go. Enough's enough. They'll soon be big enough to push the walls down, anyway. Take them away.

Antrobus. [*Sadly.*] All right. The dinosaur and mammoth——! Come on, baby, come on, Frederick. Come for a walk. That's a good little fellow.

Dinosaur. It's cold.

Antrobus. Yes, nice cold fresh air. Bracing. [*He holds the door open and the ANIMALS go out. He beckons to his friends. The REFUGEES are typical elderly out-of-works from the streets of New York today. JUDGE MOSES wears a skull cap. HOMER is a blind beggar with a guitar. The seedy crowd shuffles in and waits humbly and expectantly. ANTROBUS introduces them to his wife, who bows to each with a stately bend of her head.*] Make yourself at home. Maggie, this the doctor . . . m . . . Coffee'll be here in a minute. . . . Professor, this is my wife. . . . And: . . . Judge . . . Maggie, you know the Judge. [*An old blind man with a guitar.*] Maggie, you know. . . you know Homer?—Come right in, Judge.—Miss Muse—are some of your sisters here? Come right in. . . . Miss E. Muse; Miss T. Muse, Miss M. Muse.

Mrs. Antrobus. Pleased to meet you. Just . . . make yourself comfortable. Supper'll be ready in a minute.

[*She goes out, abruptly.*]

Antrobus. Make yourself at home, friends. I'll be right back.

[*He goes out. The REFUGEES stare about them in awe. Presently several voices start whispering "Homer! Homer!" All take it up. HOMER strikes a chord or two on his guitar, then starts to speak.*]

Homer.

Μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεά, Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος,
οὐλομένην, ἣ μυρ' Ἀχαιοῖς ἄλγε' ἔθηκε,
πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς——¹

[*HOMER's face shows he is lost in thought and memory and the words die away on his lips. The REFUGEES likewise nod in dreamy recollection. Soon the whisper "Moses, Moses!" goes around. An aged Jew parts his beard and recites dramatically.*]

Moses.

בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ;
וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תְּהוֹ וְבָהוּ וְחָשֶׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְּהוֹם
וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמָּיִם:²

[*The same dying away of the words take place, and on the part of the REFUGEES the same retreat into recollection. Some*

¹ The first two and one-half lines of Homer's *Iliad*.

² "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." *Genesis*, 1, 2.

of them murmur, "Yes, yes." The mood is broken by the abrupt entrance of Mr. and Mrs. ANTROBUS and SABINA bearing platters of sandwiches and a pail of coffee. SABINA stops and stares at the guests.]

Mr. Antrobus. Sabina, pass the sandwiches.

Sabina. I thought I was working in a respectable house that had respectable guests. I'm giving my notice, Mr. Antrobus: two weeks, that's the law.

Mr. Antrobus. Sabina! Pass the sandwiches.

Sabina. Two weeks, that's the law.

Mr. Antrobus. There's the law. That's Moses.

Sabina. [Stares.] The Ten Commandments—FAUGH!!—[To audience.] That's the worst line I've ever had to say on any stage.

Antrobus. I think the best thing to do is just not to stand on ceremony, but pass the sandwiches around from left to right.—Judge, help yourself to one of these.

Mrs. Antrobus. The roads are crowded, I hear?

The Guests. [All talking at once.] Oh, ma'am, you can't imagine. . . . You can hardly put one foot before you . . . people are trampling one another.

[Sudden silence.]

Mrs. Antrobus. Well, you know what I think it is,—I think it's sun-spots!

The Guests. [Discreet hubbub.] Oh, you're right, Mrs. Antrobus . . . that's what it is. . . . That's what I was saying the other day.

[Sudden silence.]

Antrobus. Well, I don't believe the whole world's going to turn to ice. [All eyes are fixed on him, waiting.] I can't believe it, Judge! Have we worked for nothing? Professor! Have we just failed in the whole thing?

Mrs. Antrobus. It is certainly very strange—well fortunately on both sides of the family we come of very hearty stock.—Doctor, I want you to meet my children. They're eating their supper now. And of course I want them to meet you.

Miss M. Muse. How many children have you, Mrs. Antrobus?

Mrs. Antrobus. I have two,—a boy and a girl.

Moses. [Softly.] I understood you had two sons, Mrs. Antrobus.

Mrs. Antrobus. [In blind suffering; she walks toward the footlights. In a low voice.] Abel, Abel, my son, my son, Abel, my son, Abel, Abel, my son.

[The REFUGEES move with few steps toward her as though in comfort, murmuring words in Greek, Hebrew, German, et cetera.

A piercing shriek from the kitchen,—SABINA'S voice. All heads turn.]

Antrobus. What's that?

[SABINA enters, bursting with indignation, pulling on her gloves.]

Sabina. Mr. Antrobus—that son of yours, that boy Henry Antrobus—I don't stay in this house another moment!—He's not fit to live among respectable folks and that's a fact.

Mrs. Antrobus. Don't say another word, Sabina. I'll be right back.

[Without waiting for an answer she goes past her into the kitchen.]

Sabina. Mr. Antrobus, Henry has thrown a stone again and if he hasn't killed the boy that lives next door, I'm very much mistaken. He finished his supper and went out to play; and I heard such a fight; and then I saw it. I saw it with my own eyes. And it looked to me like stark murder.

[MRS. ANTROBUS appears at the kitchen door, shielding HENRY, who follows her. When she steps aside, we see on HENRY'S forehead a large ochre and scarlet scar in the shape of a C. MR. ANTROBUS starts toward him. A pause.]

Henry. [Under his breath.] He was going to take the wheel away from me. He started to throw a stone at me first.

Mrs. Antrobus. George, it was just a boyish impulse. Remember how young he is. [Louder, in an urgent wail.] George, he's only four thousand years old.

Sabina. And everything was going along so nicely!

[Silence. ANTROBUS goes back to the fireplace.]

Antrobus. Put out the fire! Put out all the fires. [Violently.] No wonder the sun grows cold. [He starts stamping on the fireplace.]

Mrs. Antrobus. Doctor! Judge! Help me!—George, have you lost your mind?

Antrobus. There is no mind. We'll not try to live. [To the GUESTS.] Give it up. Give up trying. [MRS. ANTROBUS seizes him.]

Sabina. Mr. Antrobus! I'm downright ashamed of you.

Mrs. Antrobus. George, have some more coffee.—Gladys! Where's Gladys gone?

[GLADYS steps in, frightened.]

Gladys. Here I am, mama.

Mrs. Antrobus. Go upstairs and bring your father's slippers. How could you forget a thing like that, when you know how tired he is? [ANTROBUS sits in his chair. He covers

his face with his hands. MRS. ANTROBUS turns to the REFUGEES.] Can't some of you sing? It's your business in life to sing, isn't it? Sabina! [Several of the women clear their throats tentatively, and with frightened faces gather around HOMER's guitar. He establishes a few chords. Almost inaudibly they start singing, led by SABINA: "Jingle Bells." MRS. ANTROBUS to ANTROBUS in a low voice, while taking off his shoes.] George, remember all the other times. When the volcanoes came right up in the front yard.

And the time the grasshoppers ate every single leaf and blade of grass, and all the grain and spinach you'd grown with your own hands. And the summer there were earthquakes every night.

Antrobus. Henry! Henry! [Puts his hand on his forehead.] Myself. All of us, we're covered with blood.

Mrs. Antrobus. Then remember all the times you were pleased with him and when you were proud of yourself.—Henry! Henry! Come here and recite to your father the multiplication table that you do so nicely.

[HENRY kneels on one knee beside his father and starts whispering the multiplication table.]

Henry. [Finally.] Two times six is twelve; three times six is eighteen—I don't think I know the sixes.

[Enter GLADYS with the slippers. MRS. ANTROBUS makes stern gestures to her: Go in there and do your best. The GUESTS are now singing "Tenting Tonight."]

Gladys. [Putting slippers on his feet.] Papa . . . papa . . . I was very good in school today. Miss Conover said right out in class that if all the girls had as good manners as Gladys Antrobus, that the world would be a very different place to live in.

Mrs. Antrobus. You recited a piece at assembly, didn't you? Recite it to your father.

Gladys. Papa, do you want to hear what I recited in class? [Pierce directorial glance from her MOTHER.] "THE STAR" by Henry Wadsworth LONGFELLOW.

Mrs. Antrobus. Wait!!! The fire's going out. There isn't enough wood! Henry, go upstairs and bring down the chairs and start breaking up the beds.

[Exit HENRY. The singers return to "Jingle Bells," still very softly.]

Gladys. Look, Papa, here's my report card. Lookit. Conduct A! Look, Papa. Papa, do you want to hear "The Star," by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow? Papa, you're not mad at me, are you?—I know it'll get

warmer. Soon it'll be just like spring, and we can go to a picnic at the Hibernian Picnic Grounds like you always like to do, don't you remember? Papa, just look at me once.

[Enter HENRY with some chairs.]

Antrobus. You recited in assembly, did you? [She nods eagerly.] You didn't forget it?

Gladys. No!!! I was perfect.

[Pause. Then ANTROBUS rises, goes to the front door and opens it. The REFUGEES draw back timidly; the song stops; he peers out of the door, then closes it.]

Antrobus. [With decision, suddenly.] Build up the fire. It's cold. Build up the fire. We'll do what we can. Sabina, get some more wood. Come around the fire, everybody. At least the young ones may pull through. Henry, have you eaten something?

Henry. Yes, Papa.

Antrobus. Gladys, have you had some supper?

Gladys. I ate in the kitchen, papa.

Antrobus. If you do come through this—what'll you be able to do? What do you know? Henry, did you take a good look at that wheel?

Henry. Yes, papa.

Antrobus. [Sitting down in his chair.] Six times two are—

Henry. —twelve; six times three are eighteen; six times four are—Papa, it's hot and cold. It makes my head all funny. It makes me sleepy.

Antrobus. [Gives him a cuff.] Wake up. I don't care if your head is sleepy. Six times four are twenty-four. Six times five are—

Henry. Thirty. Papa!

Antrobus. Maggie, put something into Gladys' head on the chance she can use it.

Mrs. Antrobus. What do you mean, George?

Antrobus. Six times six are thirty-six.

Teach her the beginning of the Bible.

Gladys. But, mama, it's so cold and close.

[HENRY has all but drowned off. His FATHER slaps him sharply and the lesson goes on.]

Mrs. Antrobus. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth; and the earth was waste and void; and the darkness was upon the face of the deep—"

[The singing starts up again louder. SABINA has returned with wood.]

Sabina. [After placing wood on the fire-place comes down to the footlights and addresses the audience.] Will you please start

handing up your chairs? We'll need everything for this fire. Save the human race.—Ushers, will you pass the chairs up here? Thank you.

Henry. Six times nine are fifty-four; six times ten are sixty.

[In the back of the auditorium the sound

of chairs being ripped up can be heard. USHERS rush down the aisles with chairs and hand them over.]

Gladys. "And God called the light Day and the darkness he called Night."

Sabina. Pass up your chairs, everybody. Save the human race.

CURTAIN

ACT II

Toward the end of the intermission, though with the houselights still up, lantern slide projections begin to appear on the curtain. Timetables for trains leaving Pennsylvania Station for Atlantic City. Advertisements of Atlantic City hotels, drugstores, churches, rug merchants; fortune tellers, Bingo parlors. When the houselights go down, the voice of an ANNOUNCER is heard.

Announcer. The Management now brings you the News Events of the World. Atlantic City, New Jersey:

[Projection of a chrome postcard of the waterfront, trimmed in mica with the legend: FUN AT THE BEACH.]

This great convention city is playing host this week to the anniversary convocation of that great fraternal order,—the Ancient and Honorable Order of Mammals, Subdivision Humans. This great fraternal, militant and burial society is celebrating on the Boardwalk, ladies and gentlemen, its six-hundred-thousandth Annual Convention. It has just elected its president for the ensuing term,— [Projection of MR. and MRS. ANTROBUS posed as they will be shown a few moments later.] Mr. George Antrobus of Excelsior, New Jersey. We show you President Antrobus and his gracious and charming wife, every inch a mammal. Mr. Antrobus has had a long and chequered career. Credit has been paid to him for many useful enterprises including the introduction of the lever, of the wheel, and the brewing of beer. Credit has been also extended to President Antrobus's gracious and charming wife for many practical suggestions, including the hem, the gore, and the gusset; and the novelty of the year,—frying in oil. Before we show you Mr. An-

trobus accepting the nomination, we have an important announcement to make. As many of you know, this great celebration of the Order of the Mammals has received delegations from the other rival Orders,—or shall we say: esteemed concurrent Orders: the WINGS, the FINS, the SHELLS, and so on. These Orders are holding their conventions also, in various parts of the world, and have sent representatives to our own, two of a kind.

Later in the day we will show you President Antrobus broadcasting his words of greeting and congratulation to the collected assemblies of the whole natural world.

Ladies and Gentlemen! We give you President Antrobus!

[The screen becomes a Transparency. MR. ANTROBUS stands beside a pedestal; MRS. ANTROBUS is seated wearing a corsage of orchids. ANTROBUS wears an untidy Prince Albert; spats; from a red rosette in his buttonhole hangs a fine long purple ribbon of honor. He wears a gay lodge hat,—something between a fez and a legionnaire's cap.]

Antrobus. Fellow-mammals, fellow-vertebrates, fellow-humans, I thank you. Little did my parents think,—when they told me to stand on my own two feet,—that I'd arrive at this place.

My friends, we have come a long way.

During this week of happy celebration it is perhaps not fitting that we dwell on some of the difficult times we have been through. The dinosaur is extinct— [Applause.] —the ice has retreated; and the common cold is being pursued by every means within our power. [MRS. ANTROBUS sneezes, laughs prettily, and murmurs: "I beg your pardon."] In our memorial service yesterday we did honor to all our friends and relatives who are no

longer with us, by reason of cold, earthquakes, plagues and . . . and [*Coughs.*] differences of opinion.

As our Bishop so ably said . . . uh . . . so ably said. . . .

Mrs. Antrobus. [*Closed lips.*] Gone, but not forgotten.

Antrobus. 'They are gone, but not forgotten.' I think I can say, I think I can prophesy with complete . . . uh . . . with complete. . . .

Mrs. Antrobus. Confidence.

Antrobus. Thank you, my dear.—With complete lack of confidence, that a new day of security is about to dawn. The watchword of the closing year was: Work. I give you the watchword for the future: Enjoy Yourself.

Mrs. Antrobus. George, sit down!

Antrobus. Before I close, however, I wish to answer one of those unjust and malicious accusations that were brought against me during this last electoral campaign.

Ladies and gentlemen, the charge was made that at various points in my career I leaned toward joining some of the rival orders,—that's a lie.

As I told reporters of the *Atlantic City Herald*, I do not deny that a few months before my birth I hesitated between . . . uh . . . between pinfeathers and gill-breathing,—and so did many of us here,—but for the last million years I have been viviparous, hairy, and diaphragmatic.

[*Applause. Cries of 'Good old Antrobus,' 'The Prince chap!' 'Georgie,' etc.*]

Announcer. [*Off-stage.*] Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Antrobus. Now I know that our visitors will wish to hear a word from that gracious and charming mammal, Mrs. Antrobus, wife and mother,—Mrs. Antrobus!

Mrs. Antrobus. [*Rises, lays her program on her chair, bows and says.*] Dear friends, I don't really think I should say anything. After all, it was my husband who was elected and not I.

Perhaps, as president of the Women's Auxiliary Bed and Board Society,—I had some notes here, oh, yes, here they are:—I should give a short report from some of our committees that have been meeting in this beautiful city.

Perhaps it may interest you to know that it has at last been decided that the tomato is edible. Can you all hear me? The tomato is edible.

A delegate from across the sea reports that the thread woven by the silkworm gives a

cloth . . . I have a sample of it here . . . can you see it? smooth, elastic. I should say that it's rather attractive,—though personally I prefer less shiny surfaces. Should the windows of a sleeping apartment be open or shut? I know all mothers will follow our debates on this matter with close interest. I am sorry to say that the most expert authorities have not yet decided. It does seem to me that the night air would be bound to be unhealthy for our children, but there are many distinguished authorities on both sides. Well, I could go on talking forever,—as Shakespeare says: a woman's work is seldom done; but I think I'd better join my husband in saying thank you, and sit down. Thank you. [*She sits down.*]

Announcer. Oh, Mrs. Antrobus!

Mrs. Antrobus. Yes?

Announcer. We understand that you are about to celebrate a wedding anniversary. I know our listeners would like to extend their felicitations and hear a few words from you on that subject.

Mrs. Antrobus. I have been asked by this kind gentleman . . . yes, my friends, this Spring Mr. Antrobus and I will be celebrating our five-thousandth wedding anniversary.

I don't know if I speak for my husband, but I can say that, as for me, I regret every moment of it. [*Laughter of confusion.*]

I beg your pardon. What I *mean* to say is that I do not regret one moment of it. I hope none of you catch my cold. We have two children. We've always had two children, though it hasn't always been the same two. But as I say, we have two fine children, and we're very grateful for that. Yes, Mr. Antrobus and I have been married five-thousand years. Each wedding anniversary reminds me of the times when there were no weddings. We had to crusade for marriage. Perhaps there are some women within the sound of my voice who remember that crusade and those struggles; we fought for it, didn't we? We chained ourselves to lampposts and we made disturbances in the Senate,—anyway, at last we women got the ring.

A few men helped us, but I must say that most men blocked our way at every step: they said we were unfeminine.

I only bring up these unpleasant memories, because I see some signs of backsliding from that great victory.

Oh, my fellow mammals, keep hold of that.

My husband says that the watchword for the year is Enjoy Yourself. I think that's very open to misunderstanding. My watch-

word for the year is: Save the family. It's held together for over five thousand years: Save it! Thank you.

Announcer. Thank you, Mrs. Antrobus. [*The transparency disappears.*] We had hoped to show you the Beauty Contest that took place here today. President Antrobus, an experienced judge of pretty girls, gave the title of Miss Atlantic City 1942, to Miss Lily-Sabina Fairweather, charming hostess of our Boardwalk Bingo Parlor. Unfortunately, however, our time is up, and I must take you to some views of the Convention City and conveners,—enjoying themselves.

[*A burst of music; the curtain rises. The Boardwalk. The audience is sitting in the ocean. A handrail of scarlet cord stretches across the front of the stage. A ramp—also with scarlet hand rail—descends to the right corner of the orchestra pit where a great scarlet beach umbrella or a cabana stands. Front and right stage left are benches facing the sea; attached to each bench is a street-lamp. The only scenery is two cardboard cut-outs six feet high, representing shops at the back of the stage. Reading from left to right they are: SALT WATER TAFFY; FORTUNE TELLER; then the blank space; BINGO PARLOR; TURKISH BATH. They have practical doors, that of the Fortune Teller's being hung with bright gypsy curtains. By the left proscenium and rising from the orchestra pit is the weather signal; it is like the mast of a ship with cross bars. From time to time black discs are hung on it to indicate the storm and hurricane warnings. Three roller chairs, pushed by melancholy NEGROES file by empty. Throughout the act they traverse the stage in both directions. From time to time, CONVEENERS, dressed like MR. ANTROBUS, cross the stage. Some walk sedately by; others engage in inane horseplay. The old gypsy FORTUNE TELLER is seated at the door of her shop, smoking a corncob pipe.*

From the Bingo Parlor comes the voice of the CALLER.]

Bingo Caller. A-Nine; A-Nine. C-Twenty-six; C-Twenty-six. A-Four; A-Four. B-Twelve.

Chorus. [*Backstage.*] Bingo!!!

[*The front of the Bingo Parlor shudders, rises a few feet in the air and returns to the ground trembling.*]

Fortune Teller. [*Mechanically, to the unconscious back of a passerby, pointing with her pipe.*] Bright's disease! Your partner's

deceiving you in that Kansas City deal. You'll have six grandchildren. Avoid high places. [*She rises and shouts after another.*] Cirrhosis of the liver!

[*SABINA appears at the door of the Bingo Parlor. She hugs about her a blue raincoat that almost conceals her red bathing suit. She tries to catch the FORTUNE TELLER's attention.*]

Sabina. Ssssst! Esmeralda! Ssssst!

Fortune Teller. Keck!

Sabina. Has President Antrobus come along yet?

Fortune Teller. No, no, no. Get back there. Hide yourself.

Sabina. I'm afraid I'll miss him. Oh, Esmeralda, if I fail in this, I'll die; I know I'll die. President Antrobus!!! And I'll be his wife! If it's the last thing I'll do, I'll be Mrs. George Antrobus.—Esmeralda, tell me my future.

Fortune Teller. Keck!

Sabina. All right, I'll tell you my future. [*Laughing dreamily and tracing it out with one finger on the palm of her hand.*] I've won the Beauty Contest in Atlantic City,—well. I'll win the Beauty Contest of the whole world. I'll take President Antrobus away from that wife of his. Then I'll take every man away from his wife. I'll turn the whole earth upside down.

Fortune Teller. Keck!

Sabina. When all those husbands just think about me they'll get dizzy. They'll faint in the streets. They'll have to lean against lampposts.—Esmeralda, who was Helen of Troy?

Fortune Teller. [*Furiously.*] Shut your foolish mouth. When Mr. Antrobus comes along you can see what you can do. Until then,—go away.

[*SABINA laughs. As she returns to the door of her Bingo Parlor a group of CONVEENERS rush over and smother her with attentions: "Oh, Miss Lily, you know me. You've known me for years."*]

Sabina. Go away, boys, go away. I'm after bigger fry than you are.—Why, Mr. Simpson!! How dare you!! I expect that even you nobodies must have girls to amuse you; but where you find them and what you do with them, is of absolutely no interest to me.

[*Exit. The CONVEENERS squeal with pleasure and stumble in after her. The FORTUNE TELLER rises, puts her pipe down on the stool, unfurls her voluminous skirts, gives a sharp wrench to her bodice and strolls towards the audience, swinging her hips like a young woman.*]

Fortune Teller. I tell the future. Keck. Nothing easier. Everybody's future is in their face. Nothing easier.

But who can tell your past,—eh? Nobody!

Your youth,—where did it go? It slipped away while you weren't looking. While you were asleep. While you were drunk. Puh! You're like our friends, Mr. and Mrs. Antrobus; you lie awake nights trying to know your past. What did it mean? What was it trying to say to you?

Think! Think! Split your heads. I can't tell the past and neither can you. If anybody tries to tell you the past, take my word for it, they're charlatans! Charlatans! But I can tell the future. [*She suddenly barks at a passing chair-pusher.*] Apoplexy! [*She returns to the audience.*] Nobody listens.—Keck! I see a face among you now—I won't embarrass him by pointing him out, but, listen, it may be you: Next year the watchsprings inside you will crumple up. Death by regret,—Type Y. It's in the corners of your mouth. You'll decide that you should have lived for pleasure, but that you missed it. Death by regret,—Type Y. . . . Avoid mirrors. You'll try to be angry,—but no!—no anger. [*Far forward, confidentially.*] And now what's the immediate future of our friends, the Antrobuses? Oh, you've seen it as well as I have, keck,—that dizziness of the head; that Great Man dizziness? The inventor of beer and gunpowder? The sudden fits of temper and then the long stretches of inertia? "I'm a sultan; let my slave-girls fan me?"

You know as well as I what's coming. Rain. Rain. Rain in floods. The deluge. But first you'll see shameful things—shameful things. Some of you will be saying: "Let him drown. He's not worth saving. Give the whole thing up." I can see it in your faces. But you're wrong. Keep your doubts and despair to yourselves.

Again there'll be the narrow escape. The survival of a handful. From destruction,—total destruction. [*She points sweeping with her hand to the stage.*] Even of the animals, a few will be saved: two of a kind, male and female, two of a kind.

[*The heads of CONVEENERS appear about the stage and in the orchestra pit, jeering at her.*]

Conveeners. Charlatan! Madam Kill-joy! Mrs. Jeremiah! Charlatan!

Fortune Teller. And you! Mark my words before it's too late. Where'll you be?

Conveeners. The croaking raven. Old dust and ashes. Rags, bottles, sacks.

Fortune Teller. Yes, stick out your tongues. You can't stick your tongues out far enough to lick the death-sweat from your foreheads. It's too late to work now—bail out the flood with your soup spoons. You've had your chance and you've lost.

Conveeners. Enjoy yourselves!!!

[*They disappear. The FORTUNE TELLER looks off left and puts her finger on her lip.*]

Fortune Teller. They're coming—the Antrobuses. Keck. Your hope. Your despair. Your selves.

[*Enter from the left, Mr. and Mrs. ANTROBUS and GLADYS.*]

Mrs. Antrobus. Gladys Antrobus, stick your stummick in.

Gladys. But it's easier this way.

Mrs. Antrobus. Well, it's too bad the new president has such a clumsy daughter, that's all I can say. Try and be a lady.

Fortune Teller. Aijah! That's been said a hundred billion times.

Mrs. Antrobus. Goodness! Where's Henry? He was here just a minute ago. Henry!

[*Sudden violent stir. A roller-chair appears from the left. About it are dancing in great excitement HENRY and a NEGRO CHAIR-PUSHER.*]

Henry. [*Slingshot in hand.*] I'll put your eye out. I'll make you yell, like you never yelled before.

Negro. [*At the same time.*] Now, I warns you. I warns you. If you make me mad, you'll get hurt.

Antrobus. Henry! What is this? Put down that slingshot.

Mrs. Antrobus. [*At the same time.*] Henry! HENRY! Behave yourself.

Fortune Teller. That's right, young man. There are too many people in the world as it is. Everybody's in the way, except one's self.

Henry. All I wanted to do was—have some fun.

Negro. Nobody can't touch my chair, nobody, without I allow 'em to. You get clean away from me and you get away fast.

[*He pushes his chair off, muttering.*]

Antrobus. What were you doing, Henry?

Henry. Everybody's always getting mad. Everybody's always trying to push you around. I'll make him sorry for this; I'll make him sorry.

Antrobus. Give me that slingshot.

Henry. I won't. I'm sorry I came to this place. I wish I weren't here. I wish I weren't anywhere.

Mrs. Antrobus. Now, Henry, don't get so

excited about nothing. I declare I don't know what we're going to do with you. Put your slingshot in your pocket, and don't try to take hold of things that don't belong to you.

Antrobus. After this you can stay home. I wash my hands of you.

Mrs. Antrobus. Come now, let's forget all about it. Everybody take a good breath of that sea air and calm down. [*A passing CONVEENER bows to ANTROBUS who nods to him.*] Who was that you spoke to, George?

Antrobus. Nobody, Maggie. Just the candidate who ran against me in the election.

Mrs. Antrobus. The man who ran against you in the election!! [*She turns and waves her umbrella after the disappearing CONVEENER.*] My husband didn't speak to you and he never will speak to you.

Antrobus. Now, Maggie.

Mrs. Antrobus. After those lies you told about him in your speeches! Lies, that's what they were.

Gladys and Henry. Mama, everybody's looking at you. Everybody's laughing at you.

Mrs. Antrobus. If you must know, my husband's a SAINT, a downright SAINT, and you're not fit to speak to him on the street.

Antrobus. Now, Maggie, now, Maggie, that's enough of that.

Mrs. Antrobus. George Antrobus, you're a perfect worm. If you won't stand up for yourself, I will.

Gladys. Mama, you just act awful in public.

Mrs. Antrobus. [*Laughing.*] Well, I must say I enjoyed it. I feel better. Wish his wife had been there to hear it. Children, what do you want to do?

Gladys. Papa, can we ride in one of those chairs? Mama, I want to ride in one of those chairs.

Mrs. Antrobus. No, sir. If you're tired you just sit where you are. We have no money to spend on foolishness.

Antrobus. I guess we have money enough for a thing like that. It's one of the things you do at Atlantic City.

Mrs. Antrobus. Oh, we have? I tell you it's a miracle my children have shoes to stand up in. I didn't think I'd ever live to see them pushed around in chairs.

Antrobus. We're on a vacation, aren't we? We have a right to some treats, I guess. Maggie, some day you're going to drive me crazy.

Mrs. Antrobus. All right, go. I'll just sit here and laugh at you. And you can give me my dollar right in my hand. Mark my words, a rainy day is coming. There's a rainy day

ahead of us. I feel it in my bones. Go on, throw your money around. I can starve. I've starved before. I know how.

[*A CONVEENER puts his head through Turkish Bath window, and says with raised eyebrows.*]

Conveener. Hello, George. How are ya? I see where you brought the whole family along.

Mrs. Antrobus. And what do you mean by that?

[*CONVEENER withdraws head and closes window.*]

Antrobus. Maggie, I tell you there's a limit to what I can stand. God's Heaven, haven't I worked enough? Don't I get any vacation? Can't I even give my children so much as a ride in a roller-chair?

Mrs. Antrobus. [*Putting out her hand for raindrops.*] Anyway, it's going to rain very soon and you have your broadcast to make.

Antrobus. Now, Maggie, I warn you. A man can stand a family only just so long. I'm warning you.

[*Enter SABINA from the Bingo-Parlor. She wears a flounced red silk bathing suit, 1905. Red stockings, shoes, parasol. She bows demurely to ANTROBUS and starts down the ramp. ANTROBUS and the CHILDREN stare at her. ANTROBUS bows gallantly.*]

Mrs. Antrobus. Why, George Antrobus, how can you say such a thing! You have the best family in the world.

Antrobus. Good morning, Miss Fair-weather.

[*SABINA finally disappears behind the beach umbrella or in a cabana in the orchestra pit.*]

Mrs. Antrobus. Who on earth was that you spoke to, George?

Antrobus. [*Complacent; mock-modest.*] Hm . . . m . . . just a . . . solambaka keray.¹

Mrs. Antrobus. What? I can't understand you.

Gladys. Mama, wasn't she beautiful?

Henry. Papa, introduce her to me.

Mrs. Antrobus. Children, will you be quiet while I ask your father a simple question?—Who did you say it was, George?

Antrobus. Why-uh . . . a friend of mine. Very nice refined girl.

Mrs. Antrobus. I'm waiting.

Antrobus. Maggie, that's the girl I gave the prize to in the beauty contest,—that's Miss Atlantic City 1942.²

¹ A portmanteau word, in imitation of those found in *Finnegans Wake*.

² This date is changed to the year of performance.

Mrs. Antrobus. Hm! She looked like Sabina to me.

Henry. [At the railing.] Mama, the life-guard knows her, too. Mama, he knows her well.

Antrobus. Henry, come here.—She's a very nice girl in every way and the sole support of her aged mother.

Mrs. Antrobus. So was Sabina, so was Sabina; and it took a wall of ice to open your eyes about Sabina.—Henry, come over and sit down on this bench.

Antrobus. She's a very different matter from Sabina. Miss Fairweather is a college graduate, Phi Beta Kappa.

Mrs. Antrobus. Henry, you sit here by mama. Gladys—

Antrobus. [Sitting.] Reduced circumstances have required her taking a position as hostess in a Bingo Parlor; but there isn't a girl with higher principles in the country.

Mrs. Antrobus. Well, let's not talk about it.—Henry, I haven't seen a whale yet.

Antrobus. She speaks seven languages and has more culture in her little finger than you've acquired in a lifetime.

Mrs. Antrobus. [Assumed amiability.] All right, all right, George. I'm glad to know there are such superior girls in the Bingo Parlors.—Henry, what's that?

[Pointing at the storm signal, which has one black disk.]

Henry. What is it, papa?

Antrobus. What? Oh, that's the storm signal. One of those black disks means bad weather; two means storm; three means hurricane; and four means the end of the world.

[As they watch it a second black disk rolls into place.]

Mrs. Antrobus. Goodness! I'm going this very minute to buy you all some raincoats.

Gladys. [Putting her cheek against her father's shoulder.] Mama, don't go yet. I like sitting this way. And the ocean coming in and coming in. Papa, don't you like it?

Mrs. Antrobus. Well, there's only one thing I lack to make me a perfectly happy woman: I'd like to see a whale.

Henry. Mama, we saw two. Right out there. They're delegates to the convention. I'll find you one.

Gladys. Papa, ask me something. Ask me a question.

Antrobus. Well . . . how big's the ocean?

Gladys. Papa, you're teasing me. It's—three-hundred and sixty million square-miles—and—it—covers—three-fourths—of—the—earth's—surface—and—its—deepest—place—is—five—and—a—half—miles—deep—and—its—average—depth—is—twelve-

thousand—feet. No, Papa, ask me something hard, real hard.

Mrs. Antrobus. [Rising.] Now I'm going off to buy those raincoats. I think that bad weather's going to get worse and worse. I hope it doesn't come before your broadcast. I should think we have about an hour or so.

Henry. I hope it comes and zzzzzz everything before it. I hope it—

Mrs. Antrobus. Henry!—George, I think . . . maybe, it's one of those storms that are just as bad on land as on the sea. When you're just as safe and safer in a good stout boat.

Henry. There's a boat out at the end of the pier.

Mrs. Antrobus. Well, keep your eye on it. George, you shut your eyes and get a good rest before the broadcast.

Antrobus. Thundering Judas, do I have to be told when to open and shut my eyes? Go and buy your raincoats.

Mrs. Antrobus. Now, children, you have ten minutes to walk around. Ten minutes. And, Henry: control yourself. Gladys, stick by your brother and don't get lost.

[They run off.]

Mrs. Antrobus. Will you be all right, George?

[CONVEENERS suddenly stick their heads out of the Bingo Parlor and Salt Water Taffy store, and voices rise from the orchestra pit.]

Conveeners. George. Geo-r-r-rge! George! Leave the old hen-coop at home, George. Domes-ticated Georgie!

Mrs. Antrobus. [Shaking her umbrella.] Low common oafs! That's what they are. Guess a man has a right to bring his wife to a convention, if he wants to. [She starts off.] What's the matter with a family, I'd like to know. What else have they got to offer?

[Exit. ANTROBUS has closed his eyes.

THE FORTUNE TELLER comes out of her shop and goes over to the left proscenium. She leans against it watching SABINA quizzically.]

Fortune Teller. Heh! Here she comes!

Sabina. [Loud whisper.] What's he doing?

Fortune Teller. Oh, he's ready for you. Bite your lips, dear, take a long breath and come on up.

Sabina. I'm nervous. My whole future depends on this. I'm nervous.

Fortune Teller. Don't be a fool. What more could you want? He's forty-five. His head's a little dizzy. He's just been elected president. He's never known any other woman than his wife. Whenever he looks at

her he realizes that she knows every foolish thing he's ever done.

Sabina. [*Still whispering.*] I don't know why it is, but every time I start one of these I'm nervous.

[*The FORTUNE TELLER stands in the center of the stage watching the following.*]

Fortune Teller. You make me tired.

Sabina. First tell me my fortune. [*The FORTUNE TELLER laughs drily and makes the gesture of brushing away a nonsensical question. SABINA coughs and says.*] Oh, Mr. Antrobus,—dare I speak to you for a moment?

Antrobus. What?—Oh, certainly, certainly, Miss Fairweather.

Sabina. Mr. Antrobus . . . I've been so unhappy. I've wanted . . . I've wanted to make sure that you don't think that I'm the kind of girl who goes out for beauty contests.

Fortune Teller. That's the way!

Antrobus. Oh, I understand. I understand perfectly.

Fortune Teller. Give it a little more. Lean on it.

Sabina. I knew you would. My mother said to me this morning: Lily, she said, that fine Mr. Antrobus gave you the prize because he saw at once that you weren't the kind of girl who'd go in for a thing like that. But, honestly, Mr. Antrobus, in this world, honestly, a good girl doesn't know where to turn.

Fortune Teller. Now you've gone too far.

Antrobus. My dear Miss Fairweather!

Sabina. You wouldn't know how hard it is. With that lovely wife and daughter you have. Oh, I think Mrs. Antrobus is the finest woman I ever saw. I wish I were like her.

Antrobus. There, there. There's . . . uh . . . room for all kinds of people in the world, Miss Fairweather.

Sabina. How wonderful of you to say that. How generous!—Mr. Antrobus, have you a moment free? . . . I'm afraid I may be a little conspicuous here . . . could you come down, for just a moment, to my beach cabana . . . ?

Antrobus. Why-uh . . . yes, certainly . . . for a moment . . . just for a moment.

Sabina. There's a deck chair there. Because: you know you *do* look tired. Just this morning my mother said to me: Lily, she said, I hope Mr. Antrobus is getting a good rest. His fine strong face has deep, deep lines in it. Now isn't it true, Mr. Antrobus: you work too hard?

Fortune Teller. Bingo!

[*She goes into her shop.*]

Sabina. Now you will just stretch out. No, I shan't say a word, not a word. I shall

just sit there,—privileged. That's what I am.

Antrobus. [*Taking her hand.*] Miss Fairweather . . . you'll . . . spoil me.

Sabina. Just a moment. I have something I wish to say to the audience.—Ladies and gentlemen. I'm not going to play this particular scene tonight. It's just a short scene and we're going to skip it. But I'll tell you what takes place and then we can continue the play from there on. Now in this scene—

Antrobus. [*Between his teeth.*] But, Miss Somerset!

Sabina. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. But I have to skip it. In this scene, I talk to Mr. Antrobus, and at the end of it he decides to leave his wife, get a divorce at Reno and marry me. That's all.

Antrobus. Fitz!—Fitz!

Sabina. So that now I've told you we can jump to the end of it,—where you say—

[*Enter in fury Mr. FITZPATRICK, the stage manager.*]

Mr. Fitzpatrick. Miss Somerset, we insist on your playing this scene.

Sabina. I'm sorry, Mr. Fitzpatrick, but I can't and I won't. I've told the audience all they need to know and now we can go on.

[*Other ACTORS begin to appear on the stage, listening.*]

Mr. Fitzpatrick. And *why* can't you play it?

Sabina. Because there are some lines in that scene that would hurt some people's feelings and I don't think the theatre is a place where people's feelings ought to be hurt.

Mr. Fitzpatrick. Miss Somerset, you can pack up your things and go home. I shall call the understudy and I shall report you to Equity.

Sabina. I sent the understudy up to the corner for a cup of coffee and if Equity tries to penalize me I'll drag the case right up to the Supreme Court. Now listen, everybody, there's no need to get excited.

Mr. Fitzpatrick and Antrobus. Why can't you play it? . . . what's the matter with the scene?

Sabina. Well, if you must know, I have a personal guest in the audience tonight. Her life hasn't been exactly a happy one. I wouldn't have my friend hear some of these lines for the whole world. I don't suppose it occurred to the author that some other women might have gone through the experience of losing their husbands like this. Wild horses wouldn't drag from me the details of my friend's life, but . . . well, they'd been married twenty years, and before he got rich, why, she'd done the washing and everything.

Mr. Fitzpatrick. Miss Somerset, your friend will forgive you. We must play this scene.

Sabina. Nothing, nothing will make me say some of those lines . . . about "a man outgrows a wife every seven years" and . . . and that one about "the Mohammedans being the only people who looked the subject square in the face." Nothing.

Mr. Fitzpatrick. Miss Somerset! Go to your dressing room. I'll read your lines.

Sabina. Now everybody's nerves are on edge.

Mr. Antrobus. Skip the scene.

[*MR. FITZPATRICK and the other ACTORS go off.*]

Sabina. Thank you. I knew you'd understand. We'll do just what I said. So Mr. Antrobus is going to divorce his wife and marry me. Mr. Antrobus, you say: "It won't be easy to lay all this before my wife."

[*The ACTORS withdraw.*]

Antrobus. [*Walks about, his hand to his forehead muttering.*] Wait a minute. I can't get back into it as easily as all that. "My wife is a very obstinate woman." Hm . . . then you say . . . hm . . . Miss Fairweather, I mean Lily, it won't be easy to lay all this before my wife. It'll hurt her feelings a little.

Sabina. Listen, George: other people haven't got feelings. Not in the same way that we have,—we who are presidents like you and prize-winners like me. Listen, other people haven't got feelings; they just imagine they have. Within two weeks they go back to playing bridge and going to the movies.

Listen, dear: everybody in the world except a few people like you and me are just people of straw. Most people have no insides at all. Now that you're president you'll see that. Listen, darling, there's a kind of secret society at the top of the world,—like you and me,—that know this. The world was made for us. What's life anyway? Except for two things, pleasure and power, what is life? Boredom! Foolishness. You know it is. Except for those two things, life's nauseating. So,—come here! [*She moves close. They kiss.*] So.

Now when your wife comes, it's really very simple; just tell her.

Antrobus. Lily, Lily: you're a wonderful woman.

Sabina. Of course I am.

[*They enter the cabana and it hides them from view. Distant roll of thunder. A third black disk appears on the weather signal. Distant thunder is heard. MRS. ANTROBUS appears carrying par-*

cells. She looks about, seats herself on the bench left, and fans herself with her handkerchief. Enter GLADYS right, followed by two CONVEENERS. She is wearing red stockings.]

Mrs. Antrobus. Gladys!

Gladys. Mama, here I am.

Mrs. Antrobus. Gladys Antrobus!!! Where did you get those dreadful things?

Gladys. Wha-a-t? Papa liked the color.

Mrs. Antrobus. You go back to the hotel this minute!

Gladys. I won't. I won't. Papa liked the color.

Mrs. Antrobus. All right. All right. You stay here. I've a good mind to let your father see you that way. You stay right here.

Gladys. I . . . I don't want to stay if . . . if you don't think he'd like it.

Mrs. Antrobus. Oh . . . it's all one to me. I don't care what happens. I don't care if the biggest storm in the whole world comes. Let it come. [*She folds her hands.*] Where's your brother?

Gladys. [*In a small voice.*] He'll be here.

Mrs. Antrobus. Will he? Well, let him get into trouble. I don't care. I don't know where your father is, I'm sure.

[*Laughter from the cabana.*]

Gladys. [*Leaning over the rail.*] I think he's . . . Mama, he's talking to the lady in the red dress.

Mrs. Antrobus. Is that so? [*Pause.*] We'll wait till he's through. Sit down here beside me and stop fidgeting . . . what are you crying about?

[*Distant thunder. She covers GLADYS's stockings with a raincoat.*]

Gladys. You don't like my stockings.

[*Two CONVEENERS rush in with a microphone on a standard and various paraphernalia. The FORTUNE TELLER appears at the door of her shop. Other characters gradually gather.*]

Broadcast Official. Mrs. Antrobus! Thank God we've found you at last. Where's Mr. Antrobus? We've been hunting everywhere for him. It's about time for the broadcast to the conventions of the world.

Mrs. Antrobus. [*Calm.*] I expect he'll be here in a minute.

Broadcast Official. Mrs. Antrobus, if he doesn't show up in time, I hope you will consent to broadcast in his place. It's the most important broadcast of the year.

[*SABINA enters from cabana followed by ANTROBUS.*]

Mrs. Antrobus. No, I shan't. I haven't one single thing to say.

Broadcast Official. Then won't you help us

find him, Mrs. Antrobus? A storm's coming up. A hurricane. A deluge!

Second Conveener. [Who has sighted ANTROBUS over the rail.] Joe! Joe! Here he is.

Broadcast Official. In the name of God, Mr. Antrobus, you're on the air in five minutes. Will you kindly please come and test the instrument? That's all we ask. If you just please begin the alphabet slowly.

[ANTROBUS, with set face, comes ponderously up the ramp. He stops at the point where his waist is level with the stage and speaks authoritatively to the OFFICIALS.]

Antrobus. I'll be ready when the time comes. Until then, move away. Go away. I have something I wish to say to my wife.

Broadcast Official. [Whimpering.] Mr. Antrobus! This is the most important broadcast of the year.

[The OFFICIALS withdraw to the edge of the stage. SABINA glides up the ramp behind ANTROBUS.]

Sabina. [Whispering.] Don't let her argue. Remember arguments have nothing to do with it.

Antrobus. Maggie, I'm moving out of the hotel. In fact, I'm moving out of everything. For good. I'm going to marry Miss Fairweather. I shall provide generously for you and the children. In a few years you'll be able to see that it's all for the best. That's all I have to say.

Broadcast Official. Mr. Antrobus! I hope you'll be ready. This is the most important broadcast of the year.

Bingo Announcer. A—nine; A—nine. D—forty-two; D—forty-two. C—thirty; C—thirty.

B—seventeen; B—seventeen. C—forty; C—forty.

Gladys. What did Papa say, Mama? I didn't hear what papa said.

Chorus. Bingo!!

Broadcast Official. Mr. Antrobus. All we want to do is test your voice with the alphabet.

Antrobus. Go away. Clear out.

Mrs. Antrobus. [Composedly with lowered eyes.] George, I can't talk to you until you wipe those silly red marks off your face.

Antrobus. I think there's nothing to talk about. I've said what I have to say.

Sabina. Splendid!!

Antrobus. You're a fine woman, Maggie, but . . . but a man has his own life to lead in the world.

Mrs. Antrobus. Well, after living with you

for five thousand years I guess I have a right to a word or two, haven't I?

Antrobus. [To SABINA.] What can I answer to that?

Sabina. Tell her that conversation would only hurt her feelings. It's kinder-in-the-long-run-to-do-it-short-and-quick.

Antrobus. I want to spare your feelings in every way I can, Maggie.

Broadcast Official. Mr. Antrobus, the hurricane signal's gone up. We could begin right now.

Mrs. Antrobus. [Calmly, almost dreamily.] I didn't marry you because you were perfect. I didn't even marry you because I loved you. I married you because you gave me a promise. [She takes off her ring and looks at it.] That promise made up for your faults. And the promise I gave you made up for mine. Two imperfect people got married and it was the promise that made the marriage.

Antrobus. Maggie, . . . I was only nineteen.

Mrs. Antrobus. [She puts her ring back on her finger.] And when our children were growing up, it wasn't a house that protected them; and it wasn't our love that protected them—it was that promise.

And when that promise is broken—this can happen!

[With a sweep of the hand she removes the raincoat from GLADYS's stockings.]

Antrobus. [Stretches out his arm, apoplectic.] Gladys!! Have you gone crazy? Has everyone gone crazy? [Turning on SABINA.] You did this. You gave them to her.

Sabina. I never said a word to her.

Antrobus. [To GLADYS.] You go back to the hotel and take those horrible things off.

Gladys. [Pert.] Before I go, I've got something to tell you,—it's about Henry.

Mrs. Antrobus. [Claps her hands peremptorily.] Stop your noise,—I'm taking her back to the hotel, George. Before I go I have a letter. . . . I have a message to throw into the ocean. [Fumbling in her handbag.] Where is the plagued thing? Here it is. [She flings something—invisible to us—far over the heads of the audience to the back of the auditorium.] It's a bottle. And in the bottle's a letter. And in the letter is written all the things that a woman knows. It's never been told to any man and it's never been told to any woman, and if it finds its destination, a new time will come. We're not what books and plays say we are. We're not what advertisements say we are. We're not in the movies and we're not on the radio.

We're not what you're all told and what you think we are: We're ourselves. And if any man can find one of us he'll learn why the whole universe was set in motion. And if any man harm any one of us, his soul—the only soul he's got—had better be at the bottom of that ocean,—and that's the only way to put it. Gladys, come here. We're going back to the hotel.

[She drags GLADYS firmly off by the hand, but GLADYS breaks away and comes down to speak to her father.]

Sabina. Such goings-on. Don't give it a minute's thought.

Gladys. Anyway, I think you ought to know that Henry hit a man with a stone. He hit one of those colored men that push the chairs and the man's very sick. Henry ran away and hid and some policemen are looking for him very hard. And I don't care a bit if you don't want to have anything to do with mama and me, because I'll never like you again and I hope nobody ever likes you again,—so there!

[She runs off. ANTROBUS starts after her.]

Antrobus. I . . . I have to go and see what I can do about this.

Sabina. You stay right here. Don't you go now while you're excited. Gracious sakes, all these things will be forgotten in a hundred years. Come, now, you're on the air. Just say anything,—it doesn't matter what. Just a lot of birds and fishes and things.

Broadcast Official. Thank you, Miss Fairweather. Thank you very much. Ready, Mr. Antrobus.

Antrobus. *[Touching the microphone.]* What is it, what is it? Who am I talking to?

Broadcast Official. Why, Mr. Antrobus! To our order and to all the other orders.

Antrobus. *[Raising his head.]* What are all those birds doing?

Broadcast Official. Those are just a few of the birds. Those are the delegates to our convention,—two of a kind.

Antrobus. *[Pointing into the audience.]* Look at the water. Look at them all. Those fishes jumping. The children should see this!—There's Maggie's whales!! Here are your whales, Maggie!!

Broadcast Official. I hope you're ready, Mr. Antrobus.

Antrobus. And look on the beach! You didn't tell me these would be here!

Sabina. Yes, George. Those are the animals.

Broadcast Official. *[Busy with the apparatus.]* Yes, Mr. Antrobus, those are the vertebrates. We hope the lion will have a word to say when you're through. Step right

up, Mr. Antrobus, we're ready. We'll just have time before the storm. *[Pause. In a hoarse whisper.]* They're wait-ing.

[It has grown dark. Soon after he speaks a high whistling noise begins. Strange veering lights start whirling about the stage. The other characters disappear from the stage.]

Antrobus. Friends. Cousins. Four score and ten billion years ago our forefather brought forth upon this planet the spark of life,—

[He is drowned out by thunder. When the thunder stops the FORTUNE TELLER is seen standing beside him.]

Fortune Teller. Antrobus, there's not a minute to be lost. Don't you see the four disks on the weather signal? Take your family into that boat at the end of the pier.

Antrobus. My family? I have no family. Maggie! Maggie! They won't come.

Fortune Teller. They'll come.—Antrobus! Take these animals into that boat with you. All of them,—two of each kind.

Sabina. George, what's the matter with you? This is just a storm like any other storm.

Antrobus. Maggie!

Sabina. Stay with me, we'll go . . . *[Losing conviction.]* This is just another thunderstorm,—isn't it? Isn't it?

Antrobus. Maggie!!!

[MRS. ANTROBUS appears beside him with GLADYS.]

Mrs. Antrobus. *[Matter-of-fact.]* Here I am and here's Gladys.

Antrobus. Where've you been? Where have you been? Quick, we're going into that boat out there.

Mrs. Antrobus. I know we are. But I haven't found Henry.

[She wanders off into the darkness calling "Henry!"]

Sabina. *[Low urgent babbling, only occasionally raising her voice.]* I don't believe it. I don't believe it's anything at all. I've seen hundreds of storms like this.

Fortune Teller. There's no time to lose. Go. Push the animals along before you. Start a new world. Begin again.

Sabina. Esmeralda! George! Tell me,—is it really serious?

Antrobus. *[Suddenly very busy.]* Elephants first. Gently, gently.—Look where you're going.

Gladys. *[Leaning over the ramp and striking an animal on the back.]* Stop it or you'll be left behind!

Antrobus. Is the Kangaroo there? There you are! Take those turtles in your pouch,

will you? [*To some other animals, pointing to his shoulder.*] Here! You jump up here. You'll be trampled on.

Gladys. [*To her father, pointing below.*] Papa, look,—the snakes!

Mrs. Antrobus. I can't find Henry. Hen-ry!

Antrobus. Go along. Go along. Climb on their backs.—Wolves! Jackals,—whatever you are,—tend to your own business!

Gladys. [*Pointing, tenderly.*] Papa,—look.

Sabina. Mr. Antrobus—take me with you. Don't leave me here. I'll work. I'll help. I'll do anything.

[THREE CONVEENERS cross the stage, marching with a banner.]

Conveeners. George! What are you scared of?—George! Fellas, it looks like rain.—“Maggie, where's my umbrella?”—George, setting up for Barnum and Bailey.

Antrobus. [*Again catching his wife's hand.*] Come on now, Maggie,—the pier's going to break any minute.

Mrs. Antrobus. I'm not going a step without Henry. Henry!

Gladys. [*On the ramp.*] Mama! Papa! Hurry. The pier's cracking, Mama. It's going to break.

Mrs. Antrobus. Henry! Cain! CAIN!

[HENRY dashes onto the stage and joins his mother.]

Henry. Here I am, mama.

Mrs. Antrobus. Thank God!—now come quick.

Henry. I didn't think you wanted me.

Mrs. Antrobus. Quick!

[She pushes him down before her into the aisle.]

Sabina. [*All the ANTROBUSES are now in the theatre aisle. SABINA stands at the top of the ramp.*] Mrs. Antrobus, take me. Don't you remember me? I'll work. I'll help. Don't leave me here!

Mrs. Antrobus. [*Impatiently, but as though it were of no importance.*] Yes, yes. There's a lot of work to be done. Only hurry.

Fortune Teller. [*Now dominating the stage. To SABINA with a grim smile.*] Yes, go—back to the kitchen with you.

Sabina. [*Half-down the ramp. To FORTUNE TELLER.*] I don't know why my life's always being interrupted—just when everything's going fine!! [*She dashes up the aisle.*]

[Now the CONVEENERS emerge doing a serpentine dance on the stage. They jeer at the FORTUNE TELLER.]

Conveeners. Get a canoe—there's not a minute to be lost! Tell me my future, Mrs. Croaker.

Fortune Teller. Paddle in the water, boys—enjoy yourselves.

Voice from the Bingo Parlor. A-nine; A-nine. C-Twenty-four. C-Twenty-four.

Conveeners. Rags, bottles, and sacks.

Fortune Teller. Go back and climb on your roofs. Put rags in the cracks under your doors.—Nothing will keep out the flood. You've had your chance. You've had your day. You've failed. You've lost.

Voice from the Bingo Parlor. B-Fifteen. B-Fifteen.

Fortune Teller. [*Shading her eyes and looking out to sea.*] They're safe. George Antrobus! Think it over! A new world to make.—Think it over!

CURTAIN

ACT III

Just before the curtain rises, two sounds are heard from the stage: a cracked bugle call.

The curtain rises on almost total darkness. Almost all the flats composing the walls of Mr. ANTROBUS's house, as of Act I, are up, but they lean helter-skelter against one another, leaving irregular gaps. Among the flats missing are two in the back wall, leaving the frames of the window and door crazily out of line. Off stage, back right, some red Roman fire is burning. The bugle

call is repeated. Enter SABINA through the tilted door. She is dressed as a Napoleonic camp follower, “la fille du regiment,” in begrimed reds and blues.

Sabina. Mrs. Antrobus! Gladys! Where are you? The war's over. The war's over. You can come out. The peace treaty's been signed. Where are they?—Hmpf! Are they dead, too? Mrs. Annnntrobus! Glaaaadus! Mr. Antrobus'll be here this afternoon. I just saw him downtown. Huuuurry and put things in order. He says that now that the

war's over we'll all have to settle down and be perfect.

[Enter MR. FITZPATRICK, the stage manager, followed by the whole company, who stand waiting at the edges of the stage. MR. FITZPATRICK tries to interrupt SABINA.]

Mr. Fitzpatrick. Miss Somerset, we have to stop a moment.

Sabina. They may be hiding out in the back—

Mr. Fitzpatrick. Miss Somerset! We have to stop a moment.

Sabina. What's the matter?

Mr. Fitzpatrick. There's an explanation we have to make to the audience.—Lights, please. [To the actor who plays MR. ANTROBUS.] Will you explain the matter to the audience?

[The lights go up. We now see that a balcony or elevated runway has been erected at the back of the stage, back of the wall of the Antrobus house. From its extreme right and left ends ladder-like steps descend to the floor of the stage.]

Antrobus. Ladies and gentlemen, an unfortunate accident has taken place back stage. Perhaps I should say another unfortunate accident.

Sabina. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Antrobus. The management feels, in fact, we all feel that you are due an apology. And now we have to ask your indulgence for the most serious mishap of all. Seven of our actors have . . . have been taken ill. Apparently, it was something they ate. I'm not exactly clear what happened. [All the ACTORS start to talk at once. ANTROBUS raises his hand.] Now, now—not all at once. Fitz, do you know what it was?

Mr. Fitzpatrick. Why, it's perfectly clear. These seven actors had dinner together, and they ate something that disagreed with them.

Sabina. Disagreed with them!!! They have ptomaine poisoning. They're in Bellevue Hospital this very minute in agony. They're having their stomachs pumped out this very minute, in perfect agony.

Antrobus. Fortunately, we've just heard they'll all recover.

Sabina. It'll be a miracle if they do, a downright miracle. It was the lemon meringue pie.

Actors. It was the fish . . . it was the canned tomatoes . . . it was the fish.

Sabina. It was the lemon meringue pie. I saw it with my own eyes; it had blue mould all over the bottom of it.

Antrobus. Whatever it was, they're in no

condition to take part in this performance. Naturally, we haven't enough understudies to fill all those roles; but we do have a number of splendid volunteers who have kindly consented to help us out. These friends have watched our rehearsals, and they assure me that they know the lines and the business very well. Let me introduce them to you—my dresser, Mr. Tremayne,—himself a distinguished Shakespearean actor for many years; our wardrobe mistress, Hester; Miss Somerset's maid, Ivy; and Fred Bailey, captain of the ushers in this theatre. [These persons bow modestly. IVY and HESTER are colored girls.] Now this scene takes place near the end of the act. And I'm sorry to say we'll need a short rehearsal, just a short run-through. And as some of it takes place in the auditorium, we'll have to keep the curtain up. Those of you who wish can go out in the lobby and smoke some more. The rest of you can listen to us, or . . . or just talk quietly among yourselves, as you choose. Thank you. Now will you take it over, Mr. Fitzpatrick?

Mr. Fitzpatrick. Thank you.—Now for those of you who are listening perhaps I should explain that at the end of this act, the men have come back from the War and the family's settled down in the house. And the author wants to show the hours of the night passing by over their heads, and the planets crossing the sky . . . uh . . . over their heads. And he says—this is hard to explain—that each of the hours of the night is a philosopher, or a great thinker. Eleven o'clock, for instance, is Aristotle. And nine o'clock is Spinoza. Like that. I don't suppose it means anything. It's just a kind of poetic effect.

Sabina. Not mean anything! Why, it certainly does. Twelve o'clock goes by saying those wonderful things. I think it means that when people are asleep they have all those lovely thoughts, much better than when they're awake.

Ivy. Excuse me, I think it means,—excuse me, Mr. Fitzpatrick—

Sabina. What were you going to say, Ivy?

Ivy. Mr. Fitzpatrick, you let my father come to a rehearsal; and my father's a Baptist minister, and he said that the author meant that—just like the hours and stars go by over our heads at night, in the same way the ideas and thoughts of the great men are in the air around us all the time and they're working on us, even when we don't know it.

Mr. Fitzpatrick. Well, well, maybe that's it. Thank you, Ivy. Anyway,—the hours of the night are philosophers. My friends, are

you ready? Ivy, can you be eleven o'clock? "This good estate of the mind possessing its object in energy we call divine." Aristotle.

Ivy. Yes, sir. I know that and I know twelve o'clock and I know nine o'clock.

Mr. Fitzpatrick. Twelve o'clock? Mr. Tremayne, the Bible.

Tremayne. Yes.

Mr. Fitzpatrick. Ten o'clock? Hester,—Plato? [*She nods eagerly.*] Nine o'clock, Spinoza,—Fred?

Bailey. Yes, sir.

[FRED BAILEY picks up a great gilded cardboard numeral IX and starts up the steps to the platform. MR. FITZPATRICK strikes his forehead.]

Mr. Fitzpatrick. The planets!! We forgot all about the planets.

Sabina. O my God! The planets! Are they sick too? [ACTORS nod.]

Mr. Fitzpatrick. Ladies and gentlemen, the planets are singers. Of course, we can't replace them, so you'll have to imagine them singing in this scene. Saturn sings from the orchestra pit down here. The Moon is way up there. And Mars with a red lantern in his hand, stands in the aisle over there—Tz-tz-tz. It's too bad; it all makes a very fine effect. However! Ready—nine o'clock: Spinoza.

Bailey. [*Walking slowly across the balcony, left to right.*] "After experience had taught me that the common occurrences of daily life are vain and futile—"

Fitzpatrick. Louder, Fred. "And I saw that all the objects of my desire and fear—"

Bailey. "And I saw that all the objects of my desire and fear were in themselves nothing good nor bad save insofar as the mind was affected by them—"

Fitzpatrick. Do you know the rest? All right. Ten o'clock. Hester. Plato.

Hester. "Then tell me, O Critias, how will a man choose the ruler that shall rule over him? Will he not—"

Fitzpatrick. Thank you. Skip to the end, Hester.

Hester. "... can be multiplied a thousand fold in its effects among the citizens."

Fitzpatrick. Thank you.—Aristotle, Ivy?

Ivy. "This good estate of the mind possessing its object in energy we call divine. This we mortals have occasionally and it is this energy which is pleasant and best. But God has it always. It is wonderful in us; but in Him how much more wonderful."

Fitzpatrick. Midnight. Midnight, Mr. Tremayne. That's right,—you've done it

before.—All right, everybody. You know what you have to do.—Lower the curtain. House lights up. Act Three of THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH. [*As the curtain descends he is heard saying.*] You volunteers, just wear what you have on. Don't try to put on the costumes today.

[*House lights go down. The Act begins again. The Bugle call. Curtain rises. Enter SABINA.*]

Sabina. Mrs. Antrobus! Gladys! Where are you?

The war's over.—You've heard all this—[*She gabbles the main points.*] Where—are—they? Are—they—dead, too, et cetera. I—just—saw—Mr.—Antrobus—down town, et cetera. [*Slowing up.*] He says that now the war's over we'll all have to settle down and be perfect. They may be hiding out in the back somewhere. Mrs. An-tro-bus.

[*She wanders off. It has grown lighter. A trapdoor is cautiously raised and MRS. ANTROBUS emerges waist-high and listens. She is disheveled and worn; she wears a tattered dress and a shawl half covers her head. She talks down through the trapdoor.*]

Mrs. Antrobus. It's getting light. There's something burning over there—Newark, or Jersey City. What? Yes, I could swear I heard someone moving about up here. But I can't see anybody. I say: I can't see anybody.

[*She starts to move about the stage. GLADYS' head appears at the trapdoor. She is holding a BABY.*]

Gladys. Oh, mama. Be careful.

Mrs. Antrobus. Now, Gladys, you stay out of sight.

Gladys. Well, let me stay here just a minute. I want the baby to get some of this fresh air.

Mrs. Antrobus. All right, but keep your eyes open. I'll see what I can find. I'll have a good hot plate of soup for you before you can say Jack Robinson. Gladys Antrobus! Do you know what I think I see? There's old Mr. Hawkins sweeping the sidewalk in front of his A. and P. store. Sweeping it with a broom. Why, he must have gone crazy, like the others! I see some other people moving about, too.

Gladys. Mama, come back, come back.

Mrs. Antrobus. [*Returns to the trapdoor and listens.*] Gladys, there's something in the air. Everybody's movement's sort of different. I see some women walking right out in the middle of the street.

Sabina's Voice. Mrs. An-tro-bus!

Mrs. Antrobus and Gladys. What's that?!!
Sabina's Voice. Glaaaadys! Mrs. Antrobus!
 [Enter SABINA.]

Mrs. Antrobus. Gladys, that's Sabina's voice as sure as I live.—Sabina! Sabina!—Are you alive?!!

Sabina. Of course, I'm alive. How've you girls been?—Don't try and kiss me. I never want to kiss another human being as long as I live. Sh-sh, there's nothing to get emotional about. Pull yourself together, the war's over. Take a deep breath,—the war's over.

Mrs. Antrobus. The war's over!! I don't believe you. I don't believe you. I can't believe you.

Gladys. Mama!

Sabina. Who's that?

Mrs. Antrobus. That's Gladys and her baby. I don't believe you. Gladys, Sabina says the war's over. Oh, Sabina.

Sabina. [Leaning over the BABY.] Goodness! Are there any babies left in the world? Can it see? And can it cry and everything?

Gladys. Yes, he can. He notices everything very well.

Sabina. Where on earth did you get it? Oh, I won't ask.—Lord, I've lived all these seven years around camp and I've forgotten how to behave.—Now we've got to think about the men coming home.—Mrs. Antrobus, go and wash your face, I'm ashamed of you. Put your best clothes on. Mr. Antrobus'll be here this afternoon. I just saw him downtown.

Mrs. Antrobus and Gladys. He's alive!! He'll be here!! Sabina, you're not joking?

Mrs. Antrobus. And Henry?

Sabina. [Dryly.] Yes, Henry's alive, too; that's what they say. Now don't stop to talk. Get yourselves fixed up. Gladys, you look terrible. Have you any decent clothes?

[SABINA has pushed them toward the trapdoor.]

Mrs. Antrobus. [Half down.] Yes, I've something to wear just for this very day. But, Sabina,—who won the war?

Sabina. Don't stop now,—just wash your face. [A whistle sounds in the distance.] Oh, my God, what's that silly little noise?

Mrs. Antrobus. Why, it sounds like . . . it sounds like what used to be the noon whistle at the shoe-polish factory. [Exit.]

Sabina. That's what it is. Seems to me like peacetime's coming along pretty fast—shoe polish!

Gladys. [Half down.] Sabina, how soon after peacetime begins does the milkman start coming to the door?

Sabina. As soon as he catches a cow. Give

him time to catch a cow, dear. [Exit GLADYS. SABINA walks about a moment, thinking.] Shoe polish! My, I'd forgotten what peacetime was like. [She shakes her head, then sits down by the trapdoor and starts talking down the hole.] Mrs. Antrobus, guess what I saw Mr. Antrobus doing this morning at dawn. He was tacking up a piece of paper on the door of the Town Hall. You'll die when you hear: it was a recipe for grass soup, for a grass soup that doesn't give you the diarrhea. Mr. Antrobus is still thinking up new things.—He told me to give you his love. He's got all sorts of ideas for peacetime, he says. No more laziness and idiocy, he says. And oh, yes! Where are his books? What? Well, pass them up. The first thing he wants to see are his books. He says if you've burnt those books, or if the rats have eaten them, he says it isn't worthwhile starting over again. Everybody's going to be beautiful, he says, and diligent, and very intelligent. [A hand reaches up with two volumes.] What language is that? Pu-u-gh,—mould! And he's got such plans for you, Mrs. Antrobus. You're going to study history and algebra—and so are Gladys and I—and philosophy. You should hear him talk. [Taking two more volumes.] Well, these are in English, anyway.—To hear him talk, seems like he expects you to be a combination, Mrs. Antrobus, of a saint and a college professor, and a dancehall hostess, if you know what I mean. [Two more volumes.] Ugh. German! [She is lying on the floor; one elbow bent, her cheek on her hand, meditatively.] Yes, peace will be here before we know it. In a week or two we'll be asking the Perkinses in for a quiet evening of bridge. We'll turn on the radio and hear how to be big successes with a new toothpaste. We'll trot down to the movies and see how girls with wax faces live—all that will begin again. Oh, Mrs. Antrobus, God forgive me but I enjoyed the war. Everybody's at their best in wartime. I'm sorry it's over. And, oh, I forgot! Mr. Antrobus sent you another message—can you hear me?— [Enter HENRY, blackened and sullen. He is wearing torn overalls, but has one gaudy admiral's epaulette hanging by a thread from his right shoulder, and there are vestiges of gold and scarlet braid running down his left trouser leg. He stands listening.] Listen! Henry's never to put foot in this house again, he says. He'll kill Henry on sight, if he sees him.

You don't know about Henry??? Well, where have you been? What? Well, Henry

rose right to the top. Top of *what?* Listen, I'm telling you. Henry rose from corporal to captain, to major, to general.—I don't know how to say it, but the enemy is *Henry*; Henry is the enemy. Everybody knows that.

Henry. He'll kill me, will he?

Sabina. Who are *you?* I'm not afraid of you. The war's over.

Henry. I'll kill him so fast. I've spent seven years trying to find him; the others I killed were just substitutes.

Sabina. Goodness! It's Henry!—*[He makes an angry gesture.]* Oh, I'm not afraid of you. The war's over, Henry Antrobus, and you're not any more important than any other unemployed. You go away and hide yourself, until we calm your father down.

Henry. The first thing to do is to burn up those old books; it's the ideas he gets out of those old books that . . . that makes the whole world so you can't live in it.

[He reels forward and starts kicking the books about, but suddenly falls down in a sitting position.]

Sabina. You leave those books alone!! Mr. Antrobus is looking forward to them a-special.—Gracious sakes, Henry, you're so tired you can't stand up. Your mother and sister'll be here in a minute and we'll think what to do about you.

Henry. What did they ever care about me?

Sabina. There's that old whine again. All you people think you're not loved enough, nobody loves you. Well, you start being lovable and we'll love you.

Henry. *[Outraged.]* I don't want anybody to love me.

Sabina. Then stop talking about it all the time.

Henry. I *never* talk about it. The last thing I want is anybody to pay any attention to me.

Sabina. I can hear it behind every word you say.

Henry. I want everybody to hate me.

Sabina. Yes, you've decided that's second best, but it's still the same thing.—Mrs. Antrobus! Henry's here. He's so tired he can't stand up.

[MRS. ANTROBUS and GLADYS, with her BABY, emerge. They are dressed as in Act I. MRS. ANTROBUS carries some objects in her apron, and GLADYS has a blanket over her shoulder.]

Mrs. Antrobus and Gladys. Henry! Henry! Henry!

Henry. *[Glaring at them.]* Have you anything to eat?

Mrs. Antrobus. Yes, I have, Henry. I've been saving it for this very day,—two good

baked potatoes. No! Henry! One of them's for your father. Henry!! Give me that other potato back this minute.

[SABINA sidles up behind him and snatches the other potato away.]

Sabina. He's so dog-tired he doesn't know what he's doing.

Mrs. Antrobus. Now you just rest there, Henry, until I can get your room ready. Eat that potato good and slow, so you can get all the nourishment out of it.

Henry. You all might as well know right now that I haven't come back here to live.

Mrs. Antrobus. Sh. . . . I'll put this coat over you. Your room's hardly damaged at all. Your football trophies are a little tarnished, but Sabina and I will polish them up tomorrow.

Henry. Did you hear me? I don't live here. I don't belong to anybody.

Mrs. Antrobus. Why, how can you say a thing like that! You certainly do belong right here. Where else would you want to go? Your forehead's feverish, Henry, seems to me. You'd better give me that gun, Henry. You won't need that any more.

Gladys. *[Whispering.]* Look, he's fallen asleep already, with his potato half-chewed.

Sabina. Puh! The terror of the world.

Mrs. Antrobus. Sabina, you mind your own business, and start putting the room to rights.

[HENRY has turned his face to the back of the sofa. MRS. ANTROBUS gingerly puts the revolver in her apron pocket, then helps SABINA. SABINA has found a rope hanging from the ceiling. Grunting, she hangs all her weight on it, and as she pulls the walls begin to move into their right places. MRS. ANTROBUS brings the overturned tables, chairs, and hassock into the positions of Act I.]

Sabina. That's all we do—always beginning again! Over and over again. Always beginning again. *[She pulls on the rope and a part of the wall moves into place. She stops. Meditatively.]* How do we know that it'll be any better than before? Why do we go on pretending? Some day the whole earth's going to have to turn cold anyway, and until that time all these other things'll be happening again: it will be more wars and more walls of ice and floods and earthquakes.

Mrs. Antrobus. Sabina!! Stop arguing and go on with your work.

Sabina. All right. I'll go on just out of habit, but I won't believe in it.

Mrs. Antrobus. *[Aroused.]* Now, Sabina. I've let you talk long enough. I don't want to hear any more of it. Do I have to explain

to you what everybody knows,—everybody who keeps a home going? Do I have to say to you what nobody should ever *have* to say, because they can read it in each other's eyes? Now listen to me: [*Mrs. Antrobus takes hold of the rope.*] I could live for seventy years in a cellar and make soup out of grass and bark, without ever doubting that this world has a work to do and will do it. Do you hear me?

Sabina. [*Frightened.*] Yes, Mrs. Antrobus.

Mrs. Antrobus. Sabina, do you see this house,—216 Cedar Street,—do you see it?

Sabina. Yes, Mrs. Antrobus.

Mrs. Antrobus. Well, just to have known this house is to have seen the idea of what we can do someday if we keep our wits about us. Too many people have suffered and died for my children for us to start renegeing now. So we'll start putting this house to rights. Now, Sabina, go and see what you can do in the kitchen.

Sabina. Kitchen! Why is it that however far I go away, I always find myself back in the kitchen? [*Exit.*]

Mrs. Antrobus. [*Still thinking over her last speech, relaxes and says with a reminiscent smile.*] Goodness gracious, wouldn't you know that my father was a parson? It was just like I heard his own voice speaking and he's been dead five-thousand years. There! I've gone and almost waked Henry up.

Henry. [*Talking in his sleep, indistinctly.*] Fellows . . . what have they done for us? . . . Blocked our way at every step. Kept everything in their own hands. And you've stood it. When are you going to wake up?

Mrs. Antrobus. Sh, Henry. Go to sleep. Go to sleep. Go to sleep.—Well, that looks better. Now let's go and help Sabina.

Gladys. Mama, I'm going out in the backyard and hold the baby right up in the air. And show him that we don't have to be afraid any more.

[*Exit GLADYS to the kitchen. MRS. ANTROBUS glances at HENRY, exits into kitchen. HENRY thrashes about in his sleep. Enter ANTROBUS, his arms full of bundles, chewing the end of a carrot. He has a slight limp. Over the suit of Act I he is wearing an overcoat too long for him, its skirts trailing on the ground. He lets his bundles fall and stands looking about. Presently his attention is fixed on HENRY, whose words grow clearer.*]

Henry. All right! What have you got to lose? What have they done for us? That's

right—nothing. Tear everything down. I don't care what you smash. We'll begin again and we'll show 'em. [*ANTROBUS takes out his revolver and holds it pointing downwards. With his back towards the audience he moves toward the footlights. HENRY's voice grows louder and he wakes with a start. They stare at one another. Then HENRY sits up quickly. Throughout the following scene HENRY is played, not as a misunderstood or misguided young man, but as a representation of strong unreconciled evil.*] All right! Do something. [*Pause.*] Don't think I'm afraid of you, either. All right, do what you were going to do. Do it. [*Furiously.*] Shoot me, I tell you. You don't have to think I'm any relation of yours. I haven't got any father or any mother, or brothers or sisters. And I don't want any. And what's more I haven't got anybody over me; and I never will have. I'm alone, and that's all I want to be: alone. So you can shoot me.

Antrobus. You're the last person I wanted to see. The sight of you dries up all my plans and hopes. I wish I were back at war still, because it's easier to fight you than to live with you. War's a pleasure—do you hear me?—War's a pleasure compared to what faces us now: trying to build up a peacetime with you in the middle of it.

[*ANTROBUS walks up to the window.*]

Henry. I'm not going to be a part of any peacetime of yours. I'm going a long way from here and make my own world that's fit for man to live in. Where a man can be free, and have a chance, and do what he wants to do in his own way.

Antrobus. [*His attention arrested; thoughtfully. He throws the gun out of the window and turns with hope.*] . . . Henry, let's try again.

Henry. Try what? Living *here*?—Speaking polite downtown to all the old men like you? Standing like a sheep at the street corner until the red light turns to green? Being a good boy and a good sheep, like all the stinking ideas you get out of your books? Oh, no. I'll make a world, and I'll show you.

Antrobus. [*Hard.*] How can you make a world for people to live in, unless you've first put order in yourself? Mark my words: I shall continue fighting you until my last breath as long as you mix up your idea of liberty with your idea of hogging everything for yourself. I shall have no pity on you. I shall pursue you to the far corners of the earth. You and I want the same thing; but until you think of it as something that every-

one has a right to, you are my deadly enemy and I will destroy you.—I hear your mother's voice in the kitchen. Have you seen her?

Henry. I have no mother. Get it into your head. I don't belong here. I have nothing to do here. I have no home.

Antrobus. Then why did you come here? With the whole world to choose from, why did you come to this one place: 216 Cedar Street, Excelsior, New Jersey. . . . Well?

Henry. What if I did? What if I wanted to look at it once more, to see if—

Antrobus. Oh, you're related, all right—When your mother comes in you must behave yourself. Do you hear me?

Henry. [Wildly.] What is this?—*must* behave yourself. Don't you say *must* to me.

Antrobus. Quiet.

[Enter MRS. ANTROBUS and SABINA.]

Henry. Nobody can say *must* to me. All my life everybody's been crossing me,—everybody, everything, all of you. I'm going to be free, even if I have to kill half the world for it. Right now, too. Let me get my hand on his throat. I'll show him.

[He advances toward ANTROBUS. Suddenly, SABINA jumps between them and calls out in her own person.]

Sabina. Stop! Stop! Don't play this scene. You know what happened last night. Stop the play. [The men fall back, panting. HENRY covers his face with his hands.] Last night you almost strangled him. You became a regular savage. Stop it!

Henry. It's true. I'm sorry. I don't know what comes over me. I have nothing against him personally. I respect him very much . . . I . . . I admire him. But something comes over me. It's like I become fifteen years old again. I . . . I . . . listen: my own father used to whip me and lock me up every Saturday night. I never had enough to eat. He never let me have enough money to buy decent clothes. I was ashamed to go downtown. I never could go to the dances. My father and my uncle put rules in the way of everything I wanted to do. They tried to prevent my living at all.—I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Mrs. Antrobus. [Quickly.] No, go on. Finish what you were saying. Say it all.

Henry. In this scene it's as though I were back in High School again. It's like I had some big emptiness inside me,—the emptiness of being hated and blocked at every turn. And the emptiness fills up with the one thought that you have to strike and fight and kill. Listen, it's as though you have to kill somebody else so as not to end up killing yourself.

Sabina. That's not true. I knew your father and your uncle and your mother. You imagined all that. Why, they did everything they could for you. How can you say things like that? They didn't lock you up.

Henry. They did. They did. They wished I hadn't been born.

Sabina. That's not true.

Antrobus. [In his own person, with self-condemnation, but cold and proud.] Wait a minute. I have something to say, too. It's not wholly his fault that he wants to strangle me in this scene. It's my fault, too. He wouldn't feel that way unless there were something in me that reminded him of all that. He talks about an emptiness. Well, there's an emptiness in me, too. Yes,—work, work, work,—that's all I do. I've ceased to live. No wonder he feels that anger coming over him.

Mrs. Antrobus. There! At last you've said it.

Sabina. We're all just as wicked as we can be, and that's the God's truth.

Mrs. Antrobus. [Nods a moment, then comes forward; quietly.] Come. Come and put your head under some cold water.

Sabina. [In a whisper.] I'll go with him. I've known him a long while. You have to go on with the play. Come with me.

[HENRY starts out with SABINA, but turns at the exit and says to ANTROBUS.]

Henry. Thanks. Thanks for what you said. I'll be all right tomorrow. I won't lose control in that place. I promise.

[Exeunt HENRY and SABINA. ANTROBUS starts toward the front door, fastens it.

MRS. ANTROBUS goes up stage and places the chair close to table.]

Mrs. Antrobus. George, do I see you limping?

Antrobus. Yes, a little. My old wound from the other war started smarting again. I can manage.

Mrs. Antrobus. [Looking out of the window.] Some lights are coming on,—the first in seven years. People are walking up and down looking at them. Over in Hawkins' open lot they've built a bonfire to celebrate the peace. They're dancing around it like scarecrows.

Antrobus. A bonfire! As though they hadn't seen enough things burning.—Maggie,—the dog died?

Mrs. Antrobus. Oh, yes. Long ago. There are no dogs left in Excelsior.—You're back again! All these years. I gave up counting on letters. The few that arrived were anywhere from six months to a year late.

Antrobus. Yes, the ocean's full of letters, along with the other things.

Mrs. Antrobus. George, sit down, you're tired.

Antrobus. No, you sit down. I'm tired but I'm restless. [*Suddenly, as she comes forward.*] Maggie! I've lost it. I've lost it.

Mrs. Antrobus. What, George? What have you lost?

Antrobus. The most important thing of all: The desire to begin again, to start building.

Mrs. Antrobus. [*Sitting in the chair right of the table.*] Well, it will come back.

Antrobus. [*At the window.*] I've lost it. This minute I feel like all those people dancing around the bonfire—just relief. Just the desire to settle down; to slip into the old grooves and keep the neighbors from walking over my lawn.—Hm. But during the war,—in the middle of all that blood and dirt and hot and cold—every day and night, I'd have moments, Maggie, when I saw the things that we could do when it was over. When you're at war you think about a better life; when you're at peace you think about a more comfortable one. I've lost it. I feel sick and tired.

Mrs. Antrobus. Listen! The baby's crying. I hear Gladys talking. Probably she's quieting Henry again. George, while Gladys and I were living here—like moles, like rats, and when we were at our wits' end to save the baby's life—the only thought we clung to was that you were going to bring something good out of this suffering. In the night, in the dark, we'd whisper about it, starving and sick.—Oh, George, you'll have to get it back again. Think! What else kept us alive all these years? Even now, it's not comfort we want. We can suffer whatever's necessary; only give us back that promise.

[*Enter SABINA with a lighted lamp. She is dressed as in Act I.*]

Sabina. Mrs. Antrobus . . .

Mrs. Antrobus. Yes, Sabina?

Sabina. Will you need me?

Mrs. Antrobus. No, Sabina, you can go to bed.

Sabina. Mrs. Antrobus, if it's all right with you, I'd like to go to the bonfire and celebrate the war's over. And, Mrs. Antrobus, they've opened the Gem Movie Theatre and they're giving away a hand-painted soup tureen to every lady, and I thought one of us ought to go.

Antrobus. Well, Sabina, I haven't any money. I haven't seen any money for quite a while.

Sabina. Oh, you don't need money.

They're taking anything you can give them. And I have some . . . some . . . Mrs. Antrobus, promise you won't tell anyone. It's a little against the law. But I'll give you some, too.

Antrobus. What is it?

Sabina. I'll give you some, too. Yesterday I picked up a lot of . . . of beef-cubes!

Mrs. Antrobus. [*Turns and says calmly.*]

But, Sabina, you know you ought to give that in to the Center downtown. They know who needs them most.

Sabina. [*Outburst.*] Mrs. Antrobus, I didn't make this war. I didn't ask for it. And, in my opinion, after anybody's gone through what we've gone through, they have a right to grab what they can find. You're a very nice man, Mr. Antrobus, but you'd have got on better in the world if you'd realize that dog-eat-dog was the rule in the beginning and always will be. And most of all now. [*In tears.*] Oh, the world's an awful place, and you know it is. I used to think something could be done about it; but I know better now. I hate it. I hate it. [*She comes forward slowly and brings six cubes from the bag.*] All right. All right. You can have them.

Antrobus. Thank you, Sabina.

Sabina. Can I have . . . can I have one to go to the movies? [*ANTROBUS in silence gives her one.*] Thank you.

Antrobus. Good night, Sabina.

Sabina. Mr. Antrobus, don't mind what I say. I'm just an ordinary girl, you know what I mean, I'm just an ordinary girl. But you're a bright man, you're a very bright man, and of course you invented the alphabet and the wheel, and, my God, a lot of things . . . and if you've got any other plans, my God, don't let me upset them. Only every now and then I've got to go to the movies. I mean my nerves can't stand it. But if you have any ideas about improving the crazy old world, I'm really with you. I really am. Because it's . . . it's . . . Good night.

[*She goes out. ANTROBUS starts laughing softly with exhilaration.*]

Antrobus. Now I remember what three things always went together when I was able to see things most clearly: three things. Three things: [*He points to where SABINA has gone out.*] The voice of the people in their confusion and their need. And the thought of you and the children and this house. . . . And . . . Maggie! I didn't dare ask you: my books! They haven't been lost, have they?

Mrs. Antrobus. No. There are some of them right here. Kind of tattered.

Antrobus. Yes.—Remember, Maggie, we almost lost them once before? And when we finally did collect a few torn copies out of old cellars they ran in everyone's head like a fever. They as good as rebuilt the world.

[*Pauses, book in hand, and looks up.*]

Oh, I've never forgotten for long at a time that living is struggle. I know that every good and excellent thing in the world stands moment by moment on the razor-edge of danger and must be fought for—whether it's a field, or a home, or a country. All I ask is the chance to build new worlds and God has always given us that. And has given us [*Opening the book.*] voices to guide us; and the memory of our mistakes to warn us. Maggie, you and I will remember in peacetime all the resolves that were so clear to us in the days of war. We've come a long ways. We've learned. We're learning. And the steps of our journey are marked for us here.

[*He stands by the table turning the leaves of a book.*]

Sometimes out there in the war,—standing all night on a hill—I'd try and remember some of the words in these books. Parts of them and phrases would come back to me. And after a while I used to give names to the hours of the night. [*He sits, hunting for a passage in the book.*] Nine o'clock I used to call Spinoza. Where is it: "After experience had taught me—"

[*The back wall has disappeared, revealing the platform. FRED BAILEY carrying his numeral has started from left to right. MRS. ANTROBUS sits by the table sewing.*]

Bailey. "After experience had taught me that the common occurrences of daily life are vain and futile; and I saw that all the objects of my desire and fear were in themselves nothing good nor bad save insofar as the mind was affected by them; I at length determined to search out whether there was something truly good and communicable to man."

[*Almost without break HESTER, carrying a large Roman numeral ten, starts*

crossing the platform. GLADYS appears at the kitchen door and moves towards her mother's chair.]

Hester. "Then tell me, O Critias, how will a man choose the ruler that shall rule over him? Will he not choose a man who has first established order in himself, knowing that any decision that has its spring from anger or pride or vanity can be multiplied a thousand fold in its effect upon the citizens?"

[*HESTER disappears and IVY, as eleven o'clock, starts speaking.*]

Ivy. "This good estate of the mind possessing its object in energy we call divine. This we mortals have occasionally and it is this energy which is pleasantest and best. But God has it always. It is wonderful in us; but in Him how much more wonderful."

[*As MR. TREMAYNE starts to speak, HENRY appears at the edge of the scene, brooding and unreconciled, but present.*]

Tremayne. "In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the earth; And the Earth was waste and void; And the darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Lord said let there be light and there was light."

[*Sudden black-out and silence, except for the last strokes of the midnight bell. Then just as suddenly the lights go up, and SABINA is standing at the window, as at the opening of the play.*]

Sabina. Oh, oh, oh. Six o'clock and the master not home yet. Pray God nothing serious has happened to him crossing the Hudson River. But I wouldn't be surprised. The whole world's at sixes and sevens, and why the house hasn't fallen down about our ears long ago is a miracle to me.

[*She comes down to the footlights.*]

This is where you came in. We have to go on for ages and ages yet.

You go home.

The end of the play isn't written yet.

Mr. and Mrs. Antrobus! Their heads are full of plans and they're as confident as the first day they began,—and they told me to tell you: good night.

CURTAIN.

COME BACK, LITTLE SHEBA*

By

WILLIAM INGE

FEW DRAMATISTS HAVE COME TO BROADWAY so much a stranger and yet so long a devotee of theatre arts in all their variety as William Motter Inge (pronounced Inj). Little wonder that the Theatre Guild found it advisable to try out a play by this thirty-six-year-old playwright at their summer playhouse before risking it on Broadway. Come Back, Little Sheba was just one of many submitted by an agent of play scripts.

Its workman-like quality, enhanced by the acting of Shirley Booth as Lola, soon won the "unknown" author the common opinion that he was "Broadway's most promising playwright"; and, in addition, two of the high awards for the best play of 1950. There was no longer any doubt that here was no novice, but a competent craftsman in play structure, the projection of character, and conveyance of a moral, not by wordy preachment but by powerful suggestion from life itself, made awesomely fascinating. From the all but lost victims of life-destroying habit there is also made to emerge a fortitude and even beauty of spirit, without the least glossing, that makes the most hardened observer eager for a happy ending. But the dramatist wisely avoids the suggestion of finality in the alcoholic's struggle, however possible victory may be. Instead, the play ends in a renewal of hope, strengthened by reawakened love and sympathy between man and wife and by their determination to win by selfless co-operation—the basic requirement of Alcoholics Anonymous, to which Doc owes allegiance.

The repeated call of the title phrase, as if drawn by a psychoanalyst from the well of a woman's love almost buried under tragic neurosis, is the most moving reminder of the play's underlying beauty. It punctuates the harrowing climax in a dramatic struggle which has been shared by hundreds of thousands, including many of the world's best citizens, whose brave persistence paralleled that of Doc, resulting in an ultimate victory

thanks to one of the wisest and most genuine reformatory societies established in this land and others. Of the persistent salvaging by Alcoholics Anonymous this play is by no means an exceptional case history.

Its manifest but unobtrusive psychotherapeutic approach to sexual as well as alcoholic obsessions heightens the play's veracity and intensifies its dramatic force and its meaning for a perceptive auditor, without submerging dialogue under technicalities—a further indication of the writer's expertness. His objectivity and avoidance of verbal exposition and lyric exuberance increase the play's forthright rhythm of incidents, each of which adds to the frightening suspense created by the essentially affectionate and loyal relations of Doc and his Lola in their all but hopeless involvements. The ending, by no means cheerful, is an open door, comparable to the indeterminate endings of many modern plays. To all A.A.'s it means persistent cooperative effort, to which thousands have clung as to a life-raft buoying them to a final rescue. When charged with having written a "depressing play," Inge insisted that its import was quite the reverse, meaning, no doubt, that the renewed determination and confidence faintly evident at the end were means to final victory and lasting happiness.

Inge's theatrical adroitness was acquired in a life-long devotion to theatre expression during the conventional schooling and college career of a Midwestern intellectual. His special theatrical absorption is said to have begun at the age of seven as the result of success in a speech delivered before his classmates. An impulse for platform appearance was aroused, inducing young Inge to lose no opportunity to act on his school and college stages. He also availed himself of every college course in the history and theory of drama, and later, as teacher, he gave instruction in the art and coached its staging. He gratefully recalls a professor who paid no heed to Broadway but grounded his students in classics from Shakespeare to O'Casey. Inge deplors the tendency of

* Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.

schools and colleges to encourage student-written musicals but to neglect the original work of student dramatists whose creative talents might prove a driving force towards dramatic progress.

Inge himself is, in fact, the latest to appear in a long and notable line of academically inspired yet practical playwrights from O'Neill to Thornton Wilder and Arthur Miller. Few others have done so much to

open new vistas or to provide sincerity and excellence on the American stage. One might deplore the necessity that forced Inge at an early age to follow the academic career that he calls "the security of teaching." But this experience yielded Inge as a writer unforeseen results, among which was a purpose conspicuous in this play—to bring a more realistic understanding to bear on the problems that threaten American youth.

WILLIAM MOTTER INGE

Born 1913, Independence, Kansas.

1935, A.B., University of Kansas.

1937–1938, Teacher of English, Columbus, Kans., High School.

1938, M.A., Peabody Teachers College, Nashville, Tennessee.

1938–1943, Instructor at Stephens College for Women, Columbia, Missouri.

1943–1946, Critic of music and drama on *The Saint Louis Star-Times*.

1947, First play to be produced: *Farther Off from Heaven*, staged by Margo Jones, Dallas, Texas.

1946–1949, Instructor of English, Washington University, St. Louis.

1949–1950, *Come Back, Little Sheba*, his first Broadway production; first staged by The Theatre Guild at Westport; then in New York. Awarded the George Jean Nathan and *Theatre Time* prizes.

1953, *Picnic* awarded the Pulitzer and Drama Critics' prizes and the Donaldson Award.

PLAYS

1947 *Farther Off from Heaven*. 1949 *Come Back, Little Sheba*. 1953 *Picnic*. 1955 *Bus Stop*. 1957 *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*.

WRITINGS ON DRAMA

"Forgotten Anger," *Theatre Arts*, XLII (Feb. 1958), 68–9. "One Man's Experience in Living," *The New York Times*, July 27, 1958, II.1.3.

COME BACK, LITTLE SHEBA

CAST

(in order of appearance)

DOC.
MARIE.
LOLA.
TURK.
POSTMAN.
MRS. COFFMAN.
MILKMAN.
MESSENGER.
BRUCE.
ED ANDERSON.
ELMO HUSTON.

THE SCENE

An old house in a run-down neighborhood of a Midwestern city.

ACT ONE

SCENE I: Morning in late spring.
SCENE II: The same evening, after supper.

ACT TWO

SCENE I: The following morning.
SCENE II: Late afternoon the same day.
SCENE III: 5:30 the next morning.
SCENE IV: Morning, a week later.

ACT ONE

SCENE I

The stage is empty.

It is the downstairs of an old house in one of those semi-respectable neighborhoods in a Midwestern city. The stage is divided into two rooms, the living room at right and the kitchen at left, with a stairway and a door between. At the foot of the stairway is a small table with a telephone on it. The time is about 8:00 A.M., a morning in the late spring.

At rise of Curtain the sun hasn't come out in full force and outside the atmosphere is a little grey. The house is extremely cluttered and even dirty. The living room somehow manages to convey the atmosphere of the twenties, decorated with cheap pretense at niceness and respectability. The general effect is one of fussy awkwardness. The furniture is all heavy and rounded-looking, the chairs and davenport being covered with a shiny mohair. The davenport is littered and there are lace antimacassars on all the chairs. In such areas, houses are so close together, they hide each other from the sunlight. What sun could come through the window, at right, is dimmed by the smoky glass curtains. In the

kitchen there is a table center. On it are piled dirty dishes from supper the night before. Woodwork in the kitchen is dark and grimy. No industry whatsoever has been spent in making it one of those white, cheerful rooms that we commonly think kitchens should be. There is no action on stage for several seconds.

[Doc comes downstairs to kitchen. Coat on back of chair center. Straightens chair. Takes roll from bag on drain-board. Folds bag, tucks behind sink. Lights stove. To table, fills dishpan there and takes it to sink. Turns on water. Tucks towel in vest for apron. To center chair, says prayer. To stove, takes fry pan to sink. Turns on water. MARIE, a young girl of 18 or 19 who rooms in the house, comes out of her bedroom (next to the living room), skipping airily into the kitchen. Her hair is piled in curls on top of her head and she wears a sheer dainty negligee and smart, feathery mules on her feet. She has the cheerfulness only youth can feel in the morning.]

Marie. [To chair right, opens pocketbook there.] Hi!

Doc. Well, well, how is our star boarder this morning?

Marie. Fine.

Doc. Want your breakfast now?

Marie. Just my fruit juice. I'll drink it while I dress and have my breakfast later.

Doc. [*Two glasses to table.*] Up a little early, aren't you?

Marie. I have to get to the library and check out some books before anyone else gets them.

Doc. Yes, you want to study hard, Marie. Learn to be a fine artist some day. Paint lots of beautiful pictures. I remember a picture my mother had over the mantelpiece at home, a picture of a cathedral in a sunset, one of those big cathedrals in Europe somewhere. Made you feel religious just to look at it.

Marie. These books aren't for art, they're for biology. I have an exam.

Doc. Biology? Why do they make you take biology?

Marie. [*Laughs.*] It's required. Didn't you have to take biology when you were in college?

Doc. Well—yes, but I was preparing to study medicine, so of course I *had* to take biology and things like that. You see—I was going to be a real doctor then—only I left college my third year.

Marie. What's the matter? Didn't you like the pre-Med course?

Doc. Yes, of course—I had to give it up. Marie. Why?

Doc. [*To stove with roll on plate. Evasive.*] I'll put your sweet roll in now, Marie, so it will be nice and warm for you when you want it.

Marie. Dr. Delaney, you're so nice to your wife, and you're so nice to me; as a matter of fact, you're so nice to everyone. I hope my husband is as nice as you are. Most husbands would never think of getting their own breakfast.

Doc. [*Very pleased with this.*]—uh—you might as well sit down now and—yes, sit here and I'll serve you your breakfast now, Marie, and we can eat it together, the two of us.

Marie. [*A light little laugh as she starts dancing away from him.*] No, I like to bathe first and feel that I'm all fresh and clean to start the day. I'm going to hop into the tub now. See you later.

[*She goes upstairs.*]

Doc. Yes, fresh and clean—

[*Doc shows disappointment but goes on in businesslike way setting his breakfast on the table.*]

Marie. [*Off upstairs.*] Mrs. Delaney.

Lola. [*Off upstairs.*] 'Mornin', Honey.

[*Then LOLA comes downstairs. Enter LOLA. She is a contrast to Doc's neat cleanliness, and MARIE'S. Over a night-dress she wears a lumpy kimono. Her eyes are dim with a morning expression of disillusionment, as though she had had a beautiful dream during the night and found on waking none of it was true. On her feet are worn, dirty comfies.*]

Lola. [*With some self-pity.*] I can't sleep late like I used to. It used to be I could sleep till noon if I wanted to, but I can't any more. I don't know why.

Doc. Habits change. Here's your fruit juice.

Lola. [*Taking it.*] I oughta be gettin' your breakfast, Doc, instead of you gettin' mine.

Doc. I have to get up anyway, Baby.

Lola. [*Sadly.*] I had another dream last night.

Doc. [*Pours coffee.*] About Little Sheba?

Lola. [*With sudden animation.*] It was just as real. I dreamt I put her on a leash and we walked down town—to do some shopping. All the people on the street turned around to admire her, and I felt so proud. Then we started to walk, and the blocks started going by so fast that Little Sheba couldn't keep up with me. Suddenly, I looked around and Little Sheba was gone. Isn't that funny? I looked everywhere for her but I couldn't find her. And I stood there feeling sort of afraid. [*Pause.*] Do you suppose that means anything?

Doc. Dreams are funny.

Lola. Do you suppose it means Little Sheba is going to come back?

Doc. I don't know, Baby.

Lola. [*Petulant.*] I miss her so, Doc. She was such a cute little puppy. Wasn't she cute?

Doc. [*Smiles with the reminiscence.*] Yes, she was cute.

Lola. Remember how white and fluffy she used to be after I gave her a bath? And how her little hind-end wagged from side to side when she walked?

Doc. [*An appealing memory.*] I remember.

Lola. She was such a cute little puppy. I hated to see her grow old, didn't you, Doc?

Doc. Yah. Little Sheba should have stayed young forever. Some things should never grow old. That's what it amounts to, I guess.

Lola. She's been gone for such a long time. What do you suppose ever happened to her?

Doc. You can't ever tell.

Lola. [*With anxiety.*] Do you suppose she got run over by a car?—Or do you think that old Mrs. Coffman next door poisoned her? I wouldn't be a bit surprised.

Doc. No, Baby. She just disappeared. That's all we know.

Lola. [*Redundantly.*] Just vanished one day—vanished into thin air.

[*As though in a dream.*]

Doc. I told you I'd find you another one, Baby.

Lola. [*Pessimistically.*] You couldn't ever find another puppy as cute as Little Sheba.

Doc. [*Back to reality.*] Want an egg?

Lola. No. Just this coffee. [*He pours coffee. Suddenly.*] Have you said your prayer, Doc?

Doc. Yes, Baby.

Lola. And did you ask God to be with you—all through the day, and keep you strong?

Doc. Yes, Baby.

Lola. Then God will be with you, Docky. He's been with you almost a year now and I'm so proud of you.

Doc. [*Preening a little.*] Sometimes I feel sorta proud of myself.

Lola. Say your prayer, Doc. I like to hear it.

Doc. [*Matter-of-factly.*] God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom always to tell the difference.

Lola. That's nice. That's so pretty. When I think of the way you used to drink, always getting into fights, we had so much trouble. I was so scared! I never knew what was going to happen.

Doc. That was a long time ago, Baby.

Lola. I know it, Daddy. I know how you're going to be when you come home now.

[*She kisses him lightly.*]

Doc. I don't know what I would have done without you.

Lola. And now you've been sober almost a year.

Doc. Yep. A year next month.

[*He rises and goes to the sink with coffee cup and two glasses, rinsing them.*]

Lola. Do you have to go to the meeting tonight?

Doc. No. I can skip the meetings now for a while.

Lola. Oh, good! Then you can take me to a movie.

Doc. Sorry, Baby. I'm going out on some Twelfth Step work with Ed Anderson.

Lola. What's that?

Doc. [*Drying the glasses.*] I showed you that list of twelve steps the Alcoholics Anon-

ymous have to follow. This is the final one. After you learn to stay dry yourself, then you go out and help other guys that need it.

Lola. Oh!

Doc. [*To sink.*] When we help others, we help ourselves.

Lola. I know what you mean. Whenever I help Marie in some way, it makes me feel good.

Doc. Yah. [*Lola gives her cup to Doc. Washing it.*] Yes but this is a lot different, Baby. When I go out to help some poor drunk, I have to give him courage—to stay sober like I've stayed sober. Most alcoholics are disappointed men—They need courage—

Lola. You weren't ever disappointed, were you, Daddy?

Doc. [*After a pause.*] The important thing is to forget the past and live for the present. And stay sober doing it.

Lola. Who do you have to help tonight?

Doc. Some guy they picked up on Skid Row last night. [*Gets his coat from back of chair.*] They got him at the City Hospital. I kinda dread it.

Lola. I thought you said it helped you.

Doc. [*Puts on coat.*] It does, if you can stand it. I did some Twelfth Step work down there once before. They put alcoholics right in with the crazy people. It's horrible—these men all twisted and shaking—eyes all foggy and full of pain. Some guy there with his fists clamped together, so he couldn't kill anyone. There was a young man, just a young man, had scratched his eyes out.

Lola. [*Cringing.*] Don't, Daddy. Seems a shame to take a man there just cause he got drunk.

Doc. Well, they'll sober a man up. That's the important thing. Let's not talk about it any more.

Lola. [*With relief.*] Rita Hayworth's on tonight, out at the Plaza. Don't you want to see it?

Doc. Maybe Marie will go with you.

Lola. Oh, no. She's probably going out with Turk tonight.

Doc. She's too nice a girl to be going out with a guy like Turk.

Lola. I don't know why, Daddy. Turk's nice. [*Cuts coffee cake.*]

Doc. A guy like that doesn't have any respect for nice young girls. You can tell that by looking at him.

Lola. I never saw Marie object to any of the love-making.

Doc. A big, brawny bozo like Turk, he probably forces her to kiss him.

Lola. Daddy, that's not so at all. I came

in the back way once when they were in the living room, and she was kissing him like he was Rudolph Valentino.

Doc. [*An angry denial.*] Marie is a nice girl.

Lola. I know she's nice. I just said she and Turk were doing some tall spooning. It wouldn't surprise me any if—

Doc. Honey, I don't want to hear any more about it.

Lola. You try to make out like every young girl is Jennifer Jones in the Song of Bernadette.

Doc. I do not. I just like to believe that young people like her are clean and decent—

Marie. [*Comes down stairs.*] Hi!

[*Gets cup and saucer from drain board.*]

Lola. [*At stove.*] There's an extra sweet roll for you this morning, Honey. I didn't want mine.

Marie. One's plenty, thank you.

Doc. How soon do you leave this morning?

Marie. [*Eating.*] As soon as I finish my breakfast.

Doc. Well, I'll wait and we can walk to the corner together.

Marie. Oh, I'm sorry, Doc. Turk's coming by. He has to go to the library, too.

Doc. Oh, well I'm not going to be competition with a football player. [*To Lola.*] It's a nice spring morning. Wanta walk to the office with me?

Lola. I look too terrible, Daddy. I ain't even dressed.

Doc. Kiss Daddy goodbye.

Lola. [*Gets up and kisses him softly.*] Bye, bye, Daddy. If you get hungry, come home and I'll have something for you.

Marie. [*Joking.*] Aren't you going to kiss me, Dr. Delaney?

[*LOLA eggs Doc to go ahead.*]

Doc. [*Startled. Hesitates. Forces himself to realize she is only joking and manages to answer.*] Can't spend my time kissing all the girls.

[*MARIE laughs. DOC goes into living room while LOLA and MARIE continue talking. MARIE's scarf is tossed over his hat on chair, so he picks it up, then looks at it fondly, holding it in the air, inspecting its delicate gracefulness. He drops it back on chair and starts out by front door.*]

Marie. I think Dr. Delaney is so nice.

Lola. [*She is by the closet now, where she keeps a few personal articles. She is getting into a more becoming smock.*] When did you say Turk was coming by?

Marie. Said he'd be here about 9:30. [*Doc exits—hearing the line about TURK.*] That's a pretty smock.

Lola. [*To table, sits center chair, changes shoes.*] It'll be better to work around the house in.

Marie. [*Not sounding exactly cheerful.*] Mrs. Delaney, I'm expecting a telegram this morning. Would you leave it on my dresser for me when it comes?

Lola. Sure, Honey. No bad news, I hope.

Marie. Oh no! It's from Bruce.

Lola. [*MARIE's boy friends are one of her liveliest interests.*] Oh, your boy friend in Cincinnati. Is he coming to see you?

Marie. I guess so.

Lola. I'm just dying to meet him.

Marie. [*Changing the subject.*] Really, Mrs. Delaney, you and Doc have been so nice to me. I just want you to know I appreciate it.

Lola. Thanks, Honey.

Marie. You've been like a father and mother to me. I appreciate it.

Lola. Thanks, Honey.

Marie. Turk was saying just the other night what good sports you both are.

Lola. [*Brushing hair.*] That so?

Marie. Honest. He said it was just as much fun being with you as with kids our own age.

Lola. [*Couldn't be more flattered.*] Oh, I like that Turk. He reminds me of a boy I used to know in High School, Dutch McCoy. Where did you ever meet him?

Marie. In art class.

Lola. Turk take art?

Marie. [*Laughs.*] No. It was in a life class. He was modeling. Lots of the athletes do that. It pays them a dollar an hour.

Lola. That's nice.

Marie. Mrs. Delaney? I've got some corrections to make in some of my drawings. Is it all right if I bring Turk home this morning to pose for me? It'll just take a few minutes.

Lola. Sure, Honey.

Marie. There's a contest on now. They're giving a prize for the best drawing to use for advertising the Spring Relays.

Lola. And you're going to do a picture of Turk? That's nice. [*A sudden thought. A little secretively.*] Doc's gonna be gone to-night. You and Turk can have the living room if you want to.

Marie. [*This is a temptation.*] O.K. Thanks. [*Exits to bedroom.*]

Lola. Tell me more about Bruce.

[*Follows right to bedroom door.*]

Marie. [*Off in bedroom. Remembering*

her affinity.] Well, he comes from one of the best families in Cincinnati. And they have a great big house. And they have a maid, too. And he's got a wonderful personality. He makes \$300 a month.

Lola. That so?

Marie. And he stays at the best hotels. His company insists on it. [Enters.]

Lola. Do you like him as well as Turk?

[Buttons up back of MARIE's blouse.]

Marie. [Evasive.] Bruce is so dependable, and—he's a gentleman, too.

Lola. Are you goin' to marry him, Honey?

Marie. Maybe, after I graduate from college and he feels he can support a wife and children. I'm going to have lots and lots of children.

Lola. I wanted children, too. When I lost my baby and found out I couldn't have any more, I didn't know what to do with myself. I wanted to get a job, but Doc wouldn't hear of it.

Marie. Bruce is going to come into a lot of money some day. His uncle made a fortune in men's garters. [Exits into her room.]

Lola. [Leans on door frame.] Doc was a rich boy when I married him. His mother left him \$25,000 when she died. [Disillusioned.] It took him a lot to get his office started and everything—then, he got sick. [She makes a futile gesture; then on the bright side.] But Doc's always good to me—now.

Marie. [Reenters.] Oh, Doc's a peach.

Lola. I used to be pretty, something like you. [She gets her picture from table left.] I was Beauty Queen of the Senior Class in High School. My dad was awful strict, though. Once he caught me holding hands with that good-looking Dutch McCoy. Dad sent Dutch home, and wouldn't let me go out after supper for a whole month. Daddy would never let me go out with boys much. Just because I was pretty. He was afraid all the boys would get the wrong idea—you know. I never had any fun at all until I met Doc.

Marie. Sometimes I'm glad I didn't know my father. Mom always let me do pretty much as I please.

Lola. Doc was the first boy my dad ever let me go out with. We got married that spring.

[Replaces picture. MARIE sits davenport, puts on shoes and socks.]

Marie. What did your father think of that?

Lola. We came right to the city then. And, well, Doc gave up his pre-Med course, and went to Chiropractor School instead.

Marie. You must have been married awful young.

Lola. Oh yes. Eighteen.

Marie. That must have made your father really mad.

Lola. Yes, it did. I never went home after that, but my mother comes down here from Green Valley to visit me sometimes.

Turk. [Bursts into the front room from outside. He is a young, big, husky, good-looking boy, nineteen or twenty. He has the openness, the generosity, vigor and health of youth. He's had a little time in the service, but he is not what one would call disciplined. He wears faded dungarees and a T-shirt. He always enters unannounced. He hollers for MARIE.] Hey, Marie! Ready?

Marie. [Calling. Runs up center and exits bedroom, closing door.] Just a minute, Turk.

Lola. [Confidentially.] I'll entertain him until you're ready. [She is by nature coy and kittenish with an attractive man. Picks up papers—stuffs under table right.] The house is such a mess, Turk! I'll bet you think I'm an awful housekeeper. Some day I'll surprise you. But you're like one of the family now. [Pause]. My, you're an early caller.

Turk. Gotta get to the library. Haven't cracked a book for a biology exam and Marie's gotta help me.

Lola. [Unconsciously admiring his stature and physique and looking him over.] My. I'd think you'd be chilly running around in just that thin little shirt.

Turk. Me? I go like this in the middle of winter.

Lola. Well, you're a big husky man.

Turk. [Laughs.] Oh, I'm a brute, I am.

Lola. You should be out in Hollywood making those Tarzan movies.

Turk. I had enough of that place when I was in the Navy.

Lola. That so?

Turk. [Calling.] Hey, Marie, hurry up.

Marie. [Off.] Oh, be patient, Turk.

Turk. [To LOLA.] She doesn't realize how busy I am. I'll only have a half hour to study at most. I gotta report to the coach at 10:30.

Lola. What are you in training for now?

Turk. Spring track. They got me throwing the javelin.

Lola. The javelin? What's that?

Turk. [Laughs at her ignorance.] It's a big, long lance. [Assumes the magnificent position.] You hold it like this, erect—then you let go and it goes singing through the air, and lands yards away, if you're any good at it, and sticks in the ground, quivering like

an arrow. I won the State Championship last year.

Lola. [*She has watched as though fascinated.*] My!

Turk. [*Very generous.*] Get Marie to take you to the track field some afternoon, and you can watch me.

Lola. That would be thrilling.

Marie. [*Comes dancing in.*] Hi, Turk.

Turk. Hi, juicy.

Lola. [*As the YOUNG COUPLE move to the doorway.*] Remember, Marie, you and Turk can have the room tonight. All to yourselves. You can play the radio and dance and make a plate of fudge, or anything you want.

Marie. [*To TURK.*] O.K.?

Turk. [*With eagerness.*] Sure.

Marie. Let's go. [*Exits.*]

Lola. 'Bye, kids.

Turk. 'Bye, Mrs. Delaney. [*Gives her a chuck under the chin.*] You're a swell skirt.

[*LOLA couldn't be more flattered. For a moment she is breathless. They speed out the door and LOLA stands, sadly watching them depart. Then a sad, vacant look comes over her face. Her arms drop in a gesture of futility. Slowly she walks out on the front porch and calls.*]

Lola. Little Sheba! Come, Little She-ba. Come back—come back, Little Sheba! [*She waits for a few moments, then comes wearily back into the house, closing the door behind her. Now the morning has caught up with her. She goes to the kitchen, kicks off her pumps and gets back into comfies. The sight of the dishes on the drainboard depresses her. Clearly she is bored to death. Then the telephone rings with the promise of relieving her. She answers it.*] Hello— Oh no, you've got the wrong number— Oh, that's all right. [*Again it looks hopeless. She hears the POSTMAN. Now her spirits are lifted. She runs to the front door, opens it and awaits him. When he's within distance, she lets loose a barrage of welcome.*] 'Morning, Mr. Postman.

Postman. 'Morning, Ma'am.

Lola. You better have something for me today. Sometimes I think you don't even know I live here. You haven't left me anything for two whole weeks. If you can't do better than that, I'll just have to get a new postman.

Postman. [*On the porch.*] You'll have to get someone to write you some letters, Lady. Nope, nothing for you.

Lola. Well, I was only joking. You knew I was joking, didn't you? I'll bet you're thirsty. You come right in here and I'll bring

you a glass of cold water. [*Enters living room.*] Come in and sit down for a few minutes and rest your feet a while.

Postman. I'll take you up on that, Lady. [*Coming in.*] I've worked up quite a thirst.

Lola. You sit down. I'll be back in just a minute.

[*Goes to kitchen, gets pitcher out of refrigerator and brings it back.*]

Postman. Spring is turnin' into summer awful soon.

Lola. You feel free to stop here and ask me for a drink of water any time you want to. [*Pouring drink.*] That's what we're all here for, isn't it? To make each other comfortable?

Postman. Thank you, Ma'am.

Lola. [*Clinging, not wanting to be left alone so soon; she hurries her conversation to hold him.*] You haven't been our postman very long, have you?

Postman. [*She hands him a glass of water, stands holding pitcher as he drinks.*] No.

Lola. You postmen have things pretty nice, don't you? I hear you get nice pensions after you been working for the government twenty years. I think that's dandy. It's a good job, too. [*Pours him a second glass.*] You may get tired but I think it's good for a man to be outside and get a lot of exercise. Keeps him strong and healthy. My husband, he's a doctor, a chiropractor; he has to stay inside his office all day long. The only exercise he gets is rubbin' people's backbones. [*They laugh. LOLA crosses left to table, leaves pitcher.*] It makes his hands strong. He's got the strongest hands you ever did see. But he's got a poor digestion. I keep tellin' him he oughta get some fresh air once in a while and some exercise. [*POSTMAN rises as if to go, and this hurries her into a more absorbing monologue.*] You know what? My husband is an Alcoholics Anonymous. He doesn't care if I tell you that 'cause he's proud of it. He hasn't touched a drop in almost a year. All that time we've had a quart of whiskey in the pantry for company and he hasn't even gone near it. Doesn't even want to. You know, alcoholics can't drink like ordinary people; they're allergic to it. It affects them different. They get started drinking and can't stop. Liquor transforms them. Sometimes they get mean and violent and wanta fight—but if they let liquor alone, they're perfectly all right, just like you and me. [*POSTMAN tries to leave.*] You should have seen Doc before he gave it up. He lost all his patients, wouldn't even go to the office; just wanted to stay drunk all day long and he'd come home at night

and—— You just wouldn't believe it if you saw him now. He's got his patients all back, and he's just doing fine.

Postman. Sure I know Dr. Delaney. I deliver his office mail. He's a fine man.

Lola. Oh thanks. You don't ever drink, do you?

Postman. Oh, a few beers once in a while.

[*He is ready to go.*]

Lola. Well, I guess that stuff doesn't do any of us any good.

Postman. No. [*Crosses down for mail-bag on floor center.*] Well, good day, Ma'am.

Lola. Say, you got any kids?

Postman. Three grandchildren.

Lola. [*Getting it from table left.*] We don't have any kids, and we got this toy in a box of breakfast food. Why don't you take it home to them?

Postman. Why, that's very kind of you, Ma'am.

[*He takes it, and goes.*]

Lola. Goodbye, Mr. Postman.

Postman. [*On porch.*] I'll see that you get a letter, if I have to write it myself.

Lola. Thanks. Goodbye. [*Left alone, she turns on radio. Then she goes to kitchen to start dishes, showing her boredom in the half-hearted way she washes them. Takes water back to ice box. Then she spies Mrs. COFFMAN hanging baby clothes on lines just outside kitchen door. Goes to door.*] My, you're a busy woman this morning, Mrs. Coffman.

Mrs. Coffman. [*German accent. She is outside, but sticks her head in for some of the following.*] Being busy is being happy.

Lola. I guess so.

Mrs. Coffman. I don't have it as easy as you. When you got seven kids to look after, you got no time to sit around the house, Mrs. Delaney.

Lola. I s'pose not.

Mrs. Coffman. But you don't hear me complain.

Lola. Oh, no. You never complain. [*Pause.*] I guess my little doggie's gone for good, Mrs. Coffman. I sure miss her.

Mrs. Coffman. The only way to keep from missing one dog is to get another.

Lola. [*To sink, turns off water.*] Oh, I never could find another doggy as cute as Little Sheba.

Mrs. Coffman. Did you put an ad in the paper?

Lola. For two whole weeks. No one answered it. It's just like she vanished—into thin air. [*She likes this metaphor.*] Every day, though, I go out on the porch and call her. You can't tell; she might be around. Don't you think?

[*Mrs. Coffman.* You should get busy and forget her. You should get busy, Mrs. Delaney.

Lola. Yes, I'm going to. I'm going to start my spring house-cleaning one of these days real soon. Why don't you come in and have a cup of coffee with me, Mrs. Coffman, and we can chat a while?

Mrs. Coffman. I got work to do, Mrs. Delaney. I got work. [*Exits.*]

[*LOLA turns from the window, annoyed at her rejection. Is about to start in on the dishes when the MILKMAN arrives. She opens the back door and detains him.*]

Milkman. 'Morning, Mrs. Coffman.

Mrs. Coffman. 'Morning.

Lola. Hello there, Mr. Milkman. How are you today?

Milkman. 'Morning, Lady.

Lola. I think I'm going to want a few specials today. Can you come in a minute?

[*To icebox.*]

Milkman. [*He probably is used to her. He is not a handsome man but husky and attractive in his uniform.*] What'll it be?

Lola. [*At icebox.*] Well, now, let's see. Have you got any cottage cheese?

Milkman. We always got cottage cheese, Lady. [*Showing her card.*] All you gotta do is check the items on the card and we leave 'em. Now I gotta go back to the truck.

Lola. Now, don't scold me. I always mean to do that but you're always here before I think of it. Now, I guess I'll need some coffee cream, too—half a pint.

Milkman. Coffee cream. O.K.

Lola. Now let me see—— Oh, yes, I want a quart of buttermilk. My husband has liked buttermilk ever since he stopped drinking. My husband's an alcoholic. Had to give it up. Did I ever tell you?

Milkman. Yes, Lady.

[*Starts to go. She follows.*]

Lola. Now he can't get enough to eat. Eats six times a day. He comes home in the middle of the morning, and I fix him a snack. In the middle of the afternoon he has a malted milk with an egg in it. And then another snack before he goes to bed.

Milkman. What'd ya know?

Lola. Keeps his energy up.

Milkman. I'll bet. Anything else, Lady?

Lola. No, I guess not.

Milkman. [*Going out.*] Be back in a jiffy. [*Gives her slip. Exits.*]

Lola. I'm just so sorry I put you to so much extra work. [*He returns shortly with dairy products.*] After this I'm going to do my best to remember to check the card. I

don't think it's right to put people to extra work. [*To icebox, puts things away.*]

Milkman. [*Smiles, is willing to forget.*]
That's all right, Lady.

Lola. Maybe you'd like a piece of cake or a sandwich. Got some awfully good cold cuts in the icebox.

Milkman. No, thanks, Lady.

Lola. Or maybe you'd like a cup of coffee.

Milkman. No, thanks.

[*He's checking the items, putting them on the bill.*]

Lola. You're just a young man. You oughta be going to college. I think everybody should have an education. Do you like your job?

Milkman. It's O.K. [*Looks at LOLA.*]

Lola. You're a husky young man. You oughta be out in Hollywood making those Tarzan movies.

Milkman. [*Steps back. Feels a little flattered.*] When I first began on this job I didn't get enough exercise, so I started working out on the bar bell.

Lola. Bar bells?

Milkman. Keeps you in trim.

Lola. [*Fascinated.*] Yes, I imagine.

Milkman. I sent my picture in to Strength and Health last month. [*Proudly.*] It's a physique study! If they print it, I'll bring you a copy.

Lola. Oh, will you? I think we should all take better care of ourselves, don't you?

Milkman. If you ask me, Lady, that's what's wrong with the world today. We're not taking care of ourselves.

Lola. I wouldn't be surprised.

Milkman. Every morning I do forty push-ups before I eat my breakfast.

Lola. Push-ups?

Milkman. Like this. [*He spreads himself on the floor and demonstrates, doing three rapid push-ups. LOLA couldn't be more fascinated. Then he springs to his feet.*] That's good for shoulder development. Wanta feel my shoulders?

Lola. Why—why, yes. [*He makes one arm tense and puts her hand on his shoulder.*] Why, it's just like a rock.

Milkman. I can do seventy-nine without stopping.

Lola. Seventy-nine!

Milkman. Now feel my arm.

Lola. [*Does so.*] Goodness!

Milkman. You wouldn't believe what a puny kid I was. Sickly, no appetite.

Lola. Is that a fact? And, my! Look at you now.

Milkman. [*Very proud.*] Shucks, any man could do the same—if he just takes care of himself.

Lola. Oh sure, sure.

[*A horn is heard offstage.*]

Milkman. There's my buddy. I gotta beat it. [*Picks up his things, shakes hands, leaves hurriedly.*] See you tomorrow, Lady.

Lola. 'Bye.

[*She watches him from kitchen window until he gets out of sight. There is a look of some wonder on her face, an emptiness, as though she were unable to understand anything that ever happened to her. She looks at clock, runs into living room, turns on radio. A pulsating tom-tom is heard as a theme introduction. Then the ANNOUNCER.*]

Announcer. [*In dramatic voice.*] TA-BOOOOOO! [*Now in a very soft, highly personalized voice. LOLA sits davenport, eats candy.*] It's Ta-boo, radio listeners, your fifteen minutes of temptation. [*An alluring voice.*] Won't you join me? [*LOLA swings feet up.*] Won't you leave behind your routine, the dull cares that make up your day-to-day existence, the little worries, the uncertainties, the confusions of the work-a-day world and follow me where pagan spirits hold sway, where lithe natives dance on a moon-enchanted isle, where palm trees sway with the restless ocean tide, restless surging on the white shore. Won't you come along? [*More tom-tom. Now in an oily voice.*] But remember, it's TA-BOOOOOOooooo-OOO!

[*Now the tom-tom again, going into a sensual, primitive rhythm melody. LOLA has been transfixed from the beginning of the program. She lies down on the davenport, listening. Then, slowly, growing more and more comfortable.*]

Western Union Boy. [*At door.*] Telegram for Miss Maria Buckholder.

Lola. She's not here.

Western Union Boy. Sign here.

[*LOLA does, then she closes the door and brings the envelope into the house, looking at it wonderingly. This is a major temptation for her. She puts the envelope on the table down right, but can't resist looking at it. Finally she gives in and takes it to the kitchen to steam it open. Then MARIE and TURK burst into the room. LOLA, confused, wonders what to do with the telegram, then decides, just in the nick of time, to jam it in her apron pocket.*]

Marie. Mrs. Delaney! [*Turns off radio. At the sound of MARIE'S voice, LOLA, embar-*

rassedly, runs in to greet them.] —mind if we turn your parlor into an art studio?

Lola. Sure, go right ahead. Hi, Turk.

[TURK gives a wave of his arm.]

Marie. [To TURK, indicating her bedroom.] You can change in there, Turk.

[TURK goes into bedroom.]

Lola. Change?

Marie. He's gotta take off his clothes.

Lola. Huh? [Closes door.]

Marie. These drawings are for my life class.

Lola. [Consoled but still mystified.] Oh.

Marie. [Sits davenport.] Turk's the best male model we've had all year. Lotsa athletes pose for us 'cause they've all got muscles. They're easier to draw.

Lola. You mean—he's gonna pose naked?

Marie. [Laughs.] No. The women do, but the men are always more proper. Turk's going to pose in his track suit.

Lola. Oh. [Almost to herself.] The women pose nude but the men don't. [This strikes her as a startling inconsistency.] If it's all right for a woman, it oughta be for a man.

Marie. [Businesslike.] The man always keeps covered. [Calling to TURK.] Hurry up, Turk.

Turk. [With all his muscles in place, he comes out. He is not at all self-conscious about his semi-nudity. His body is something he takes very much for granted. LOLA is a little dazed by the spectacle of flesh.] How do you want this lovely body? Same pose I took in Art Class?

Marie. Yah. Over there where I can get more light on you.

Turk. [Opens door. Starts pose.] Anything in the house I can use for a javelin?

Marie. Is there, Mrs. Delaney?

Lola. How about the broom?

Turk. O.K.

[LOLA runs out to get it. TURK goes to her in kitchen, takes it, returns to living room and resumes pose.]

Marie. [From davenport, studying TURK in relation to her sketch-pad. Moves his leg.] Your left foot a little more this way. [Studying it.] O.K., hold it.

[Starts sketching rapidly and industriously.]

Lola. [Looks on, lingeringly. Starts unwillingly into kitchen, changes her mind and returns to the scene of action. MARIE and TURK are too busy to comment. LOLA looks at sketch, inspecting it.] Well—that's real pretty, Marie. [Marie is intent. LOLA moves closer to look at the drawing.] It—it's real artistic. [Pause.] I wish I was artistic.

Turk. Baby, I can't hold this pose very long at a time.

Marie. Rest whenever you feel like it.

Turk. O.K.!

Marie. [To LOLA.] If I make a good drawing, they'll use it for the posters for the Spring Relays.

Lola. Ya. You told me.

Marie. [To TURK.] After I'm finished with these sketches I won't have to bother you any more.

Turk. No bother. [Rubs his shoulder—he poses.] Hard pose, though. Gets me in the shoulder.

[MARIE pays no attention. LOLA peers at him so closely he becomes a little self-conscious and breaks pose. This also breaks LOLA's concentration.]

Lola. I'll heat you up some coffee.

[Goes to kitchen.]

Turk. [Crosses to MARIE. Softly to MARIE.] Hey, can't you keep her out of here? She makes me feel naked.

Marie. [Laughs.] I can't keep her out of her own house, can I?

Turk. Didn't she ever see a man before?

Marie. Not a big, beautiful man like you, Turkey. [TURK smiles, is flattered by any recognition of his physical worth, takes it as an immediate invitation to lovemaking. Pulling her up, he kisses her as DOC comes up on porch. MARIE pushes TURK away.] Turk, get back in your corner.

Doc. [Comes in from outside. Cheerily.] Hi, everyone.

Marie. Hi.

Turk. Hi, Doc. [Doc then sees TURK, feels immediate resentment. Goes into kitchen to LOLA.] What's goin' on here?

Lola. [Getting cups.] Oh, hello, Daddy. Marie's doin' a drawin'.

Doc. [Trying to size the situation up. MARIE and TURK are too busy to speak.] Oh.

Lola. I've just heated up the coffee. Want some?

Doc. Yeah. What happened to Turk's clothes?

Lola. Marie's doing some drawings for her life classes, Doc.

Doc. Can't she draw him with his clothes on?

Lola. [Crossing with coffee. Very professional now.] No, Doc, it's not the same. See, it's a life class. They draw bodies. They all do it, right in the classroom.

Doc. Why, Marie's just a young girl; she shouldn't be drawing things like that. I don't care if they do teach it at college. It's not right.

Lola. [*Disclaiming responsibility.*] I don't know, Doc.

Turk. [*Turns.*] I'm tired.

Marie. [*Squats at his feet.*] Just let me finish the foot.

Doc. Why doesn't she draw something else—a bowl of flowers or a cathedral—or a sunset.

Lola. All she told me, Doc, was if she made a good drawing of Turk, they'd use it for the posters for the Spring Relay. [*Pause.*] So I guess they don't want sunsets.

Doc. What if someone walked into the house now? What would they think?

Lola. Daddy, Marie just asked me if it was all right if Turk came and posed for her. Now that's all she said, and I said O.K. But if you think it's wrong, I won't let them do it again.

Doc. I just don't like it.

Marie. Hold it a minute more.

Turk. O.K.

Lola. Well, then you speak to Marie about it if——

Doc. [*He'd never mention anything disapprovingly to MARIE.*] No, Baby. I couldn't do that.

Lola. Well then——

Doc. Besides, it's not her fault. If those college people make her do drawings like that, I suppose she has to do them. I just don't think it's right she should have to, that's all.

Lola. Well, if you think it's wrong——

Doc. [*Ready to dismiss it.*] Never mind.

Lola. I don't see any harm in it, Daddy.

Doc. Forget it.

Lola. [*To ice box.*] Would you like some buttermilk?

Doc. Thanks.

Marie. [*Finishes sketch.*] O.K. That's all I can do for today.

Turk. Is there anything I can do for you?

Marie. Yes—get your clothes on.

Turk. O.K., Coach.

[*TURK exits to bedroom. MARIE sits down right.*]

Lola. You know what Marie said, Doc? She said that the women posed naked, but the men don't.

Doc. Why, of course, Honey.

Marie. Why is that?

Doc. [*Stumped.*] —well——

Lola. If it's all right for a woman, it oughta be for a man. But the man always keeps covered. That's what she said.

Doc. Well, that's the way it should be, Honey. A man, after all, is a man, and he—well, he has to protect himself.

Lola. And a woman doesn't?

Doc. It's different, Honey.

Lola. Is it? I've got a secret, Doc. Bruce is comin'.

Doc. Is that so?

Lola. [*After a glum silence.*] You know—Marie's boy friend from Cincinnati. I promised Marie a long time ago, when her fiance came to town, dinner was on me. So I'm getting out the best china and cook the best meal you ever sat down to.

Doc. When did she get the news?

Lola. The telegram came this morning.

Doc. That's fine. That Bruce sounds to me like just the fellow for her. I think I'll go in and congratulate her.

Lola. [*Nervous.*] Not now, Doc.

Doc. Why not?

Lola. Well, Turk's there. It might make him feel embarrassed.

Doc. Well, why doesn't Turk clear out now that Bruce is coming? What's he hanging around for? She's engaged to marry Bruce, isn't she?

[*TURK enters from bedroom and goes to MARIE, starting to make advances.*]

Lola. Marie's just doing a picture of him, Doc.

Doc. You always stick up for him. You encourage him.

Lola. Shhh, Daddy. Don't get upset.

Doc. [*Very angrily.*] All right, but if anything happens to the girl I'll never forgive you.

[*Doc goes upstairs. TURK then grabs MARIE, kisses her passionately.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE II

The same evening, after supper. Outside it is dark. There has been an almost miraculous transformation of the entire house. LOLA, apparently, has been working hard and fast all day. The rooms are spotlessly clean and there are such additions as new lampshades, fresh curtains, etc. In the kitchen all the enamel surfaces glisten, and piles of junk that have lain around for months have been disposed of.

[*LOLA and Doc are in the kitchen, he washing up the dishes and she puttering around putting the finishing touches on her housecleaning.*]

Lola. [*At stove.*] There's still some beans left. Do you want them, Doc?

Doc. I had enough.

Lola. I hope you got enough to eat tonight, Daddy. I been so busy cleaning I didn't have time to fix you much.

Doc. I wasn't very hungry.

Lola. [*To table, cleaning up.*] You know what? Mrs. Coffman said I could come over and pick all the lilacs I wanted for my centerpiece tomorrow. Isn't that nice? I don't think she poisoned Little Sheba, do you?

Doc. I never did think so, Baby. Where'd you get the new curtains?

Lola. I went out and bought them this afternoon. Aren't they pretty? Be careful of the woodwork; it's been varnished.

Doc. How come, Honey?

Lola. [*Gets broom and dust pan from closet.*] Bruce is comin'. I figured I had to do my spring house-cleaning sometime.

Doc. You got all this done in one day? The house hasn't looked like this in years.

Lola. I can be a good housekeeper when I want to be, can't I, Doc?

Doc. [*Kneels, holding dustpan for LOLA.*] I never had any complaints. Where's Marie now?

Lola. I don't know, Doc. I haven't seen her since she left here this morning with Turk.

Doc. [*Rises. A look of disapproval.*] Marie's too good to be wasting her time with him.

Lola. Daddy, Marie can take care of herself. Don't worry. [*To closet—returns broom.*]

Doc. [*Goes into living room.*] 'Bout time for Fibber McGee and Molly.

Lola. [*Untying apron. To closet and then to back door.*] Daddy, I'm gonna run over to Mrs. Coffman's and see if she's got any silver polish. I'll be right back.

[*Doc goes to radio. LOLA exits. At the radio DOC starts twisting the dial. He rejects one noisy program after another, then very unexpectedly he comes across a rendition of Schubert's famous "Ave Maria," sung in a high soprano voice. Probably he has encountered the piece before somewhere, but it is now making its first impression on him. Gradually he is transported into a world of ethereal beauty which he never knew existed. He listens intently. The music has expressed some ideal of beauty he never fully realized and he is even a little mystified. Then LOLA comes in the back door, letting it slam, breaking the spell, and announcing in a loud, energetic voice.*]

Lola. Isn't it funny? I'm not a bit tired

tonight. You'd think after working so hard all day I'd be pooped.

Doc. [*He cringes.*] Baby, don't use that word.

Lola. [*Sets silver polish down and joins Doc on davenport.*] I'm sorry, Doc. I hear Marie and Turk say it all the time, and I thought it was kinda cute.

Doc. It—it sounds vulgar.

Lola. [*Kisses Doc.*] I won't say it again, Daddy. Where's Fibber McGee?

Doc. Not quite time yet.

Lola. Let's get some peppy music.

Doc. [*Tuning in a sentimental dance band.*] That what you want?

Lola. That's O.K. [*Doc takes a pack of cards off radio, returns to davenport and starts shuffling them very deftly.*] I love to watch you shuffle cards, Daddy. You use your hands so gracefully. [*She watches closely.*] Do me one of your card tricks.

Doc. Baby, you've seen them all.

Lola. But I never get tired of them.

Doc. O.K. Take a card. [*LOLA does.*] Keep it now. Don't tell me what it is.

Lola. I won't.

Doc. [*Shuffling cards again.*] Now put it back in the deck. I won't look. [*He closes his eyes.*]

Lola. [*With childish delight.*] All right.

Doc. Put it back.

Lola. Uh-huh.

Doc. O.K. [*Shuffles cards again, cutting them, taking top half off, exposing LOLA's card, to her astonishment.*] That your card?

Lola. [*Unbelievably.*] Daddy, how did you do it?

Doc. Baby, I've pulled that trick on you dozens of times.

Lola. But I never understand how you do it.

Doc. Very simple.

Lola. Docky, show me how you do that.

Doc. [*You can forgive him a harmless feeling of superiority.*] Try it for yourself.

Lola. Doc, you're clever. I never could do it.

Doc. Nothing to it.

Lola. There is too. Show me how you do it, Doc.

Doc. And give away all my secrets? It's a gift, Honey. A magic gift.

Lola. Can't you give it to me?

Doc. [*Picks up newspaper.*] A man has to keep some things to himself.

Lola. It's not a gift at all, it's just some trick you learned.

Doc. O.K., Baby, any way you want to look at it.

Lola. Let's have some music. How soon do you have to meet Ed Anderson?

Doc. [Turns on radio.] I still got a little time. [Pleased.]

Lola. Marie's going to be awfully happy when she sees the house all fixed up. She can entertain Bruce here when he comes, and maybe we could have a little party here and you can do your card tricks.

Doc. O.K.

Lola. I think a young girl should be able to bring her friends home.

Doc. Sure.

Lola. We never liked to sit around the house 'cause the folks always stayed there with us. [Rises—starts dancing alone.] Remember the dances we used to go to, Daddy?

Doc. Sure.

Lola. We had awful good times—for a while, didn't we?

Doc. Yes, Baby.

Lola. Remember the homecoming dance, when Charlie Kettlekamp and I won the Charleston Contest?

Doc. Yah. Please, Honey, I'm trying to read.

Lola. And you got mad at him 'cause he thought he should take me home afterwards.

Doc. I did not.

Lola. Yes, you did. Charlie was all right, Doc, really he was. You were just jealous.

Doc. I wasn't jealous.

Lola. [She has become very coy and flirtatious now, an old dog playing old tricks.] You got jealous. Every time we went out any place and I even looked at another boy. There was never anything between Charlie and me; there never was.

Doc. That was a long time ago—

Lola. Lots of other boys called me up for dates—Sammy Knight—Hand Biederman—Dutch McCoy.

Doc. Sure, Baby. You were the "it" girl.

Lola. [Pleading for his attention now.] But I saved all my dates for you, didn't I, Doc?

Doc. [Trying to joke.] As far as I know, Baby.

Lola. [Hurt.] Daddy, I did. You got to believe that. I never took a date with any other boy but you.

Doc. [A little weary and impatient.] That's all forgotten now. [Turns off radio.]

Lola. How can you talk that way, Doc? That was the happiest time of our lives. I'll never forget it.

Doc. [Disapprovingly.] Honey!

Lola. [At the window.] That was a nice spring. The trees were so heavy and green and the air smelled so sweet. Remember the

walks we used to take, down to the old chapel, where it was so quiet and still?

[Sits davenport.]

Doc. In the spring a young man's fancy turns—pretty fancy.

Lola. [In the same tone of reverie.] I was pretty then, wasn't I, Doc? Remember the first time you kissed me? You were scared as a young girl, I believe, Doc; you trembled so. [She is being very soft and delicate. Caught in the reverie, he chokes a little and cannot answer.] We'd been going together all year and you were always so shy. Then for the first time you grabbed me and kissed me. Tears came to your eyes, Doc, and you said you'd love me forever and ever. Remember? You said—if I didn't marry you, you wanted to die—I remember 'cause it scared me for anyone to say a thing like that.

Doc. [In a repressed tone.] Yes, Baby.

Lola. And when the evening came on, we stretched out on the cool grass and you kissed me all night long.

Doc. [Opens door.] Baby, you've got to forget those things. That was twenty years ago.

Lola. I'll soon be forty. Those years have just vanished—vanished into thin air.

Doc. Yes.

Lola. Just disappeared—like Little Sheba. [Pause.] Maybe you're sorry you married me now. You didn't know I was going to get old and fat and sloppy—

Doc. Oh, Baby!

Lola. It's the truth. That's what I am. But I didn't know it, either. Are you sorry you married me, Doc?

Doc. Of course not.

Lola. I mean, are you sorry you had to marry me?

Doc. [Onto porch.] We were never going to talk about that, Baby.

Lola. [Following Doc out.] You were the first one, Daddy, the only one. I'd just die if you didn't believe that.

Doc. [Tenderly.] I know, Baby.

Lola. You were so nice and so proper, Doc; I thought nothing we could do together could ever be wrong—or make us unhappy. Do you think we did wrong, Doc?

Doc. [Consoling.] No, Baby, of course I don't.

Lola. I don't think anyone knows about it except my folks, do you?

Doc. [Crossing in to up right.] Of course not, Baby.

Lola. [Follows in.] I wish the baby had lived, Doc. I don't think that woman knew her business, do you, Doc?

Doc. I guess not.

Lola. If we'd gone to a doctor, she would have lived, don't you think?

Doc. Perhaps.

Lola. A doctor wouldn't have known we'd just got married, would he? Why were we so afraid?

Doc. [*Sits davenport.*] We were just kids. Kids don't know how to look after things.

Lola. [*Sits davenport.*] If we'd had the baby she'd be a young girl now; then maybe you'd have saved your money, Doc, and she could be going to college—like Marie.

Doc. Baby, what's done is done.

Lola. It must make you feel bad at times to think you had to give up being a doctor and to think you don't have any money like you used to.

Doc. No—no, Baby. We should never feel bad about what's past. What's in the past can't be helped. You—you've got to forget it and live for the present. If you can't forget the past, you stay in it and never get out. I might be a big M.D. today, instead of a chiropractor; we might have had a family to raise and be with us now; I might still have a lot of money if I'd used my head and invested it carefully, instead of gettin' drunk every night. We might have a nice house, and comforts, and friends. But we don't have any of those things. So what! We gotta keep on living, don't we? I can't stop just 'cause I made a few mistakes. I gotta keep goin'—somehow.

Lola. Sure, Daddy.

Doc. [*Sighs and wipes brow.*] I—I wish you wouldn't ask me questions like that, Baby. Let's not talk about it any more. I gotta keep goin', and not let things upset me, or—or—I saw enough at the City Hospital to keep me sober for a long time.

Lola. I'm sorry, Doc. I didn't mean to upset you.

Doc. I'm not upset.

Lola. What time'll you be home tonight?

Doc. 'Bout eleven o'clock.

Lola. I wish you didn't have to go tonight. I feel kinda lonesome.

Doc. Ya, so do I, Baby, but sometime soon we'll go out together. I kinda hate to go to those night clubs and places since I stopped drinking, but some night I'll take you out to dinner.

Lola. Oh, will you, Daddy?

Doc. We'll get dressed up and go to the Windermere and have a fine dinner, and dance between courses.

Lola. [*Eagerly.*] Let's do, Daddy. I got a little money saved up. I got about forty dollars out in the kitchen. We can take that if you need it.

Doc. I'll have plenty of money the first of the month.

Lola. [*She has made a quick response to the change of mood, seeing a future evening of carefree fun.*] What are we sitting round here so serious for? [*To radio.*] Let's have some music. [*LOLA gets a lively foxtrot on the radio, dances with Doc. They begin dancing vigorously, as though to dispense with the sadness of the preceding dialogue, but slowly it winds them and leaves LOLA panting.*] We oughta go dancing—all the time, Ducky—it'd be good for us. Maybe if I danced more often I'd lose—some of—this fat. I remember—I used to be able to dance like this—all night—and not even notice—it. [*LOLA breaks into a Charleston routine as of yore.*] Remember the Charleston, Daddy?

[*Doc is clapping his hands in rhythm.*

Then MARIE bursts in through the front door, the personification of the youth that LOLA is trying to recapture.]

Doc. Hi, Marie!

Marie. What are you trying to do, a jig, Mrs. Delaney?

[*MARIE doesn't intend her remark to be cruel, but it wounds LOLA. LOLA stops abruptly in her dancing, losing all the fun she has been able to create for herself. She feels she might cry, so to hide her feelings she hurries quietly out to kitchen. Doc and MARIE do not notice.*]

Marie. [*Noticing the change in atmosphere.*] Hey, what's been happening around here?

Doc. Lola got to feeling industrious. You oughta see the kitchen.

Marie. [*Running to kitchen, where she is too observant of the changes to notice LOLA is weeping in corner. LOLA, of course, straightens up as soon as MARIE enters.*] What got into you, Mrs. Delaney? You've done wonders with the house. It looks marvellous.

Lola. [*Quietly.*] Thanks, Marie.

Marie. [*Darting back into living room.*] I can hardly believe I'm in the same place.

Doc. [*Meaning BRUCE.*] Think your boy friend'll like it?

Marie. [*Thinking of TURK.*] You know how men are. Turk never notices things like that.

[*Starts into her own room, blowing a kiss to Doc on her way. LOLA comes back in, dabbing at her eyes.*]

Doc. Turk? [*MARIE is gone; turning to LOLA.*] What's the matter, Honey?

Lola. I don't know.

Doc. Feel bad about something?

Lola. I didn't want her to see me dancing that way. Makes me feel sorta silly.

Doc. Why, you're a fine dancer.

Lola. I feel kinda silly.

Marie. [*Jumps back into the room with her telegram.*] My telegram's here. When did it come?

Lola. It came about an hour ago, Honey.

[*Lola looks nervously at Doc. Doc looks puzzled and a little sore.*]

Marie. Bruce is coming! "Arriving tomorrow 5:00 P.M. CST, Flight 22, Love, Bruce." When did the telegram come?

Doc. So it came an hour ago.

[*Looks hopelessly at LOLA, then goes to kitchen.*]

Lola. [*Nervously.*] Isn't it nice I got the house all cleaned? Marie, you bring Bruce to dinner with us tomorrow night. It'll be a sort of wedding present.

Marie. That would be wonderful, Mrs. Delaney, but I don't want you to go to any trouble.

Lola. No trouble at all. Now I insist. [*Front doorbell rings.*] That must be Turk.

Marie. [*Whispers.*] Don't tell him. [*Goes to door. LOLA scampers to kitchen.*] Hi, Turk. Come on in.

Turk. [*Entering. Stalks her.*] Hi.

[*Looks around to see if anyone is present, then takes her in his arms and starts to kiss her.*]

Lola. I'm sorry, Doc. I'm sorry about the telegram.

Doc. Baby, people don't do things like that. Don't you understand? Nice people don't.

Marie. Stop it!

Turk. What's the matter?

Marie. They're in the kitchen.

[*Goes into bedroom. TURK sits with book.*]

Doc. Why didn't you give it to her when it came?

Lola. Well, Doc, Turk was posing for Marie this morning, and I couldn't give it to her while he was here.

[*TURK listens at door.*]

Doc. Well, it just isn't nice to open other people's mail.

[*TURK crosses up to MARIE's door.*]

Lola. I guess I'm not nice, then. That what you mean?

Marie. Turk, will you get away from that door?

Doc. No, Baby, but—

Lola. I don't see any harm in it, Doc. I steamed it open and sealed it back. [*TURK at switch in living room.*] She'll never know

the difference. I don't see any harm in that, Doc.

Doc. [*Gives up.*] O.K., Baby, if you don't see any harm in it, I guess I can't explain it.

[*Starts getting ready to go.*]

Lola. I'm sorry, Doc. Honest, I'll never do it again. Will you forgive me?

Doc. [*Giving her a peck of a kiss.*] I forgive you.

Marie. [*Comes back with book.*] Let's look like we're studying.

Turk. Biology? Hot dog!

Lola. [*After MARIE leaves her room.*] Now I feel better. Do you have to go now?

[*TURK sits by MARIE on davenport.*]

Doc. Yah.

Lola. Before you go why don't you show your tricks to Marie.

Doc. [*Reluctantly.*] Not now.

Lola. Oh, please do. They'd be crazy about them.

Doc. [*With pride.*] O.K. [*Preens himself a little.*] If you think they'd enjoy them— [*LOLA, starting to living room, stops suddenly upon seeing MARIE and TURK spooning behind a book. A broad, pleased smile breaks on her face and she stands silently watching.* Doc, at sink.] Well—what's the matter, Baby?

Lola. [*Soft voice.*] Oh—nothing—nothing—Doc.

Doc. Well, do you want me to show 'em my tricks or don't you?

Lola. [*Coming back to center of kitchen; in a secretive voice with a little giggle.*] I guess they wouldn't be interested now.

Doc. [*With injured pride. A little sore.*] Oh, very well.

Lola. Come and look, Daddy.

Doc. [*Shocked and angry.*] No!

Lola. Just one little look. They're just kids, Daddy. It's sweet.

[*Drags him by arm.*]

Doc. [*Jerking loose.*] Stop it, Baby. I won't do it. It's not decent to snoop around spying on people like that. It's cheap and mischievous and mean.

Lola. [*This had never occurred to her.*] Is it?

Doc. Of course it is.

Lola. I don't spy on Marie and Turk to be mischievous and mean.

Doc. Then why do you do it?

Lola. You watch young people make love in the movies, don't you, Doc? There's nothing wrong with that. And I know Marie and I like her, and Turk's nice, too. They're both so young and pretty. Why shouldn't I watch them?

Doc. I give up.

Lola. Well, why shouldn't I?

Doc. I don't know, Baby, but it's not nice.

[*TURK kisses MARIE's ear.*]

Lola. I think it's one of the nicest things I know.

[*Plaintive.*]

Marie. Let's go out on the porch.

[*They steal out.*]

Doc. It's not right for Marie to do that, particularly since Bruce is coming. We shouldn't allow it.

Lola. Oh, they don't do any harm, Doc. I think it's all right.

Doc. It's not all right. I don't know why you encourage that sort of thing.

Lola. I don't encourage it.

Doc. You do, too. You like that fellow Turk. You said so. And I say he's no good. Marie's sweet and innocent; she doesn't understand guys like him. I think I oughta run him outa the house.

Lola. Daddy, you wouldn't do that.

Doc. [*Very heated.*] Then you talk to her and tell her how we feel.

Lola. Hush, Daddy. They'll hear you.

Doc. I don't care if they do hear me.

Lola. [*To Doc at stove.*] Don't get upset, Daddy. Bruce is coming and Turk won't be around any longer. I promise you.

Doc. All right. I better go.

Lola. I'll go with you, Doc. Just let me run up and get a sweater. Now wait for me.

Doc. Hurry, Baby.

[*Lola goes upstairs. Doc is at platform when he hears TURK laugh on the porch. He goes down left to cabinet—sees whiskey bottle. Reaches for it and hears MARIE giggle. Turns away as TURK laughs again. Turns back to the bottle and hears LOLA's voice from upstairs. MARIE and TURK return to living room. TURK takes LOLA's picture from shelf up right.*]

Lola. I'll be there in a minute, Doc.

[*Enters downstairs.*] I'm all ready. [*Doc turns out kitchen lights and they go into living room.*] I'm walking Doc down to the bus. [*Doc sees TURK with LOLA's picture. Takes it out of his hand, puts it on shelf up right as LOLA leads him out. Doc is off.*] Come on, Dad, here's your hat. Then I'll go for a long walk in the moonlight. Have a good time. [*She exits.*]

Marie. 'Bye, Mrs. Delaney.

Turk. He hates my guts. [*To front door.*]

Marie. Oh, he does not.

[*Follows TURK, blocks his exit in door.*]

Turk. Yes, he does. If you ask me, he's jealous.

Marie. Jealous?

Turk. I've always thought he had a crush on you.

Marie. Now, Turk, don't be silly. Doc is nice to me. It's just in a few little things he does, like fixing my breakfast, but he's nice to everyone.

Turk. He ever make a pass?

Marie. No. He'd never get fresh.

Turk. He better not.

Marie. Turk, don't be ridiculous. Doc's such a nice, quiet man; if he gets any fun out of being nice to me, why not?

Turk. He's got a wife of his own, hasn't he? Why doesn't he make a few passes at her?

Marie. Things like that are none of our business.

Turk. O.K. How about a snuggle, Lovely?

Marie. [*A little prim and businesslike.*] No more for tonight, Turk.

Turk. Why's tonight different from any other night?

Marie. I think we should make it a rule, every once in a while, just to sit and talk.

[*Starts to sit davenport—crosses to chair down right.*]

Turk. [*Restless. Sits davenport.*] O.K. What'll we talk about?

Marie. Well—there's lotsa things.

Turk. O.K. Start in.

Marie. A person doesn't start a conversation that way.

Turk. Start it any way you want to.

Marie. Two people should have something to talk about, like politics or psychology or religion.

Turk. How 'bout sex?

Marie. Turk!

Turk. [*Chases her around davenport.*] Have you read the Kinsey report, Miss Buckholder?

Marie. I should say not.

Turk. How old were you when you had your first affair, Miss Buckholder?—and did you ever have relations with your grandfather?

Marie. Turk, stop it.

Turk. You wanted to talk about something; I was only trying to please. Let's have a kiss.

Marie. Not tonight.

Turk. Who you savin' it up for?

Marie. Don't talk that way.

Turk. [*Yawns—crosses to door.*] Well, thanks, Miss Buckholder, for a nice evening. It's been a most enjoyable talk.

Marie. [*Anxious.*] Turk, where are you going?

Turk. I guess I'm a man of action, Baby.

Marie. Turk, don't go.

Turk. Why not? I'm not doin' any good here.

Marie. Don't go.

Turk. [*Returns and she touches him.*]

Now why didn't you think of this before? C'mon, let's get to work.

[*They sit on davenport.*]

Marie. Oh Turk, this is all we ever do.

Turk. Are you complaining?

Marie. [*Weakly.*] —no.

Turk. Then what do you want to put on such a front for?

Marie. —it's not a front.

Turk. What else is it? [*Mimicking.*] Oh, no, Turk. Not tonight, Turk. I want to talk about philosophy, Turk. [*Himself again.*] When all the time you know that if I went outa here without givin' you a good lovin' up you'd be sore as hell— Wouldn't you?

Marie. [*She has to admit to herself it's true; she chuckles.*] Oh—Turk—

Turk. It's true, isn't it?

Marie. Maybe.

Turk. How about tonight, Lovely; going to be lonesome?

Marie. Turk, you have the Spring Relays.

Turk. What of it? I can throw that old javelin any old time, any old time. C'mon, Baby, we've got by with it before, haven't we?

Marie. I'm not so sure.

Turk. What do you mean?

Marie. Sometimes I think Mrs. Delaney knows.

Turk. Well, bring her along. I'll take care of her too, if it'll keep her quiet.

Marie. [*A pretense of being shocked.*] Turk!

Turk. What makes you think so?

Marie. Women just sense those things. She asks so many questions.

Turk. She ever say anything?

Marie. No.

Turk. Now you're imagining things.

Marie. Maybe.

Turk. Well, stop it.

Marie. O.K.

Turk. [*Rises—follows MARIE.*] Honey, I know I talk awful rough around you at times; I never was a very gentlemanly bastard, but you really don't mind it—do you? [*She only smiles mischievously.*] Anyway, you know I'm nuts about you.

Marie. [*Smug.*] Are you?

[*Now they engage in a little rough-house, he cuffing her like an affectionate bear, she responding with "Stop it," "Turk, that hurt," etc. And she slaps him playfully. Then they laugh together at their own pretense. Now LOLA enters the back way very quietly, tiptoeing through the dark kitchen, standing by the doorway where she can peek at them. There is a quiet, satisfied smile on her face. She watches every move they make, alertly.*]

Turk. Now, Miss Buckholder, what is your opinion of the psychodynamic pressure of living in the atomic age?

Marie. [*Playfully.*] Turk, don't make fun of me.

Turk. Tonight?

Marie. [*Her eyes dance as she puts him off just a little longer.*] —well.

Turk. Tonight will never come again. [*This is true. She smiles.*] O.K.?

Marie. Tonight will never come again—O.K. [*They embrace and start to dance.*] Let's go out somewhere first and have a few beers. We can't come back till they're asleep.

Turk. O.K.

[*They dance slowly out the door. Then LOLA moves quietly into the living room and out onto the porch. There she can be heard calling plaintively in a lost voice.*]

Lola. Little Sheba—come back—Come back, Little Sheba. Come back.

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE I

The next morning.

[*LOLA and Doc are at breakfast again. LOLA is rambling on while Doc sits meditatively, his head down, his face in his hands.*]

Lola. [*In a light, humorous way, as though the faults of youth were as blameless as the uncontrollable actions of a puppy. Chuckles.*] Then they danced for a while and went out together, arm in arm—

Doc. [*Left of table. Very nervous and tense.*] I don't wanta hear any more about it, Baby.

Lola. What's the matter, Docky?

Doc. Nothing.

Lola. You look like you didn't feel very good.

Doc. I didn't sleep well last night.

Lola. You didn't take any of those sleeping pills, did you?

Doc. No.

Lola. Well, don't. The doctors say they're terrible for you.

Doc. I'll feel better after a while.

Lola. Of course you will.

Doc. What time did Marie come in last night?

Lola. I don't know, Doc. I went to bed early and went right to sleep. Why?

Doc. Oh—nothing.

Lola. You musta slept if you didn't hear her.

Doc. I heard her; it was after midnight.

Lola. Then what did you ask me for?

Doc. I wasn't sure it was her.

Lola. What do you mean?

Doc. I thought I heard a man's voice.

Lola. Turk probably brought her inside the door.

Doc. [Troubled.] I thought I heard someone laughing. A man's laugh—I guess I was just hearing things.

Lola. Say your prayer?

Doc. [Gets up.] Yes.

Lola. Kiss me 'bye. [He leans over and kisses her, then puts on his coat and starts to leave.] Do you think you could get home a little early? I want you to help me entertain Bruce. Marie said he'd be here about 5:30. I'm going to have a lovely dinner: stuffed pork chops, twice-baked potatoes, and asparagus, and for dessert a big chocolate cake and maybe ice cream—

Doc. Sounds fine.

Lola. So you get home and help me.

Doc. O.K.

[Doc leaves kitchen and goes into living room. Again on the chair down right is MARIE's scarf. He picks it up as before and fondles it. Then there is the sound of TURK's laughter, soft and barely audible. It sounds like the laugh of a sated Bacchus. Doc's body stiffens. It is a sickening fact he must face and it has been revealed to him in its ugliest light. The lyrical grace, the spiritual ideal of Ave Maria is shattered. He has been fighting the truth, maybe suspecting all along that he was deceiving himself. Now he looks as though he might vomit. All his blind confusion is inside him. With an immobile expression of blankness on his face, he stumbles

into the table above the davenport.]

Lola. [Still in kitchen.] Haven't you gone yet, Docky?

Doc. [Dazed.] No—no, Baby.

Lola. [Coming in doorway.] Anything the matter?

Doc. No—no. I'm all right now.

[Drops scarf, takes hat. He has managed to sound perfectly natural. He braces himself and goes out. LOLA stands a moment, looking after him with a little curiosity. Then MRS. COFFMAN enters, sticks her head in back door.]

Mrs. Coffman. Anybody home?

Lola. [On platform.] 'Morning, Mrs. Coffman.

Mrs. Coffman. [Inspecting the kitchen's new look.] So this is what you've been up to, Mrs. Delaney.

Lola. [Proud.] Yes, I been busy.

[MARIE's door opens and closes. MARIE sticks her head out of her bedroom door to see if the coast is clear, then sticks her head back in again to whisper to TURK that he can leave without being observed.]

Mrs. Coffman. Busy? Good Lord, I never seen such activity. What got into you, Lady?

Lola. Company tonight. I thought I'd fix things up a little.

Mrs. Coffman. You mean you done all this in one day?

Lola. [With simple pride.] I said I been busy.

Mrs. Coffman. Dear God, you done your spring housecleaning all in one day.

[TURK appears in living room.]

Lola. [Appreciating this.] I fixed up the living room a little, too.

Mrs. Coffman. I must see it. [Goes into living room. TURK apprehends her and ducks back into MARIE's room, shutting the door behind himself and MARIE.] I declare! Overnight you turn the place into something really swanky.

Lola. Yes, and I bought a few new things, too.

Mrs. Coffman. Neat as a pin, and so warm and cozy. I take my hat off to you, Mrs. Delaney. I didn't know you had it in you. All these years, now, I been sayin' to myself, "That Mrs. Delaney is a good for nothing—sits around the house all day, and never so much as shakes a dust mop." I guess it just shows, we never really know what people are like.

Lola. I still got some coffee, Mrs. Coffman.

Mrs. Coffman. Not now, Mrs. Delaney. Seeing your house so clean makes me feel

ashamed. I gotta get home and get to work.

[To kitchen.]

Lola. [Follows.] I hafta get busy, too. I got to get out all the silver and china. I like to set the table early, so I can spend the rest of the day looking at it.

[BOTH laugh.]

Mrs. Coffman. Good day, Mrs. Delaney.

[Exits.]

[Hearing the screen door slam, MARIE guards the kitchen door and TURK slips out the front. But neither has counted on Doc's reappearance. After seeing that TURK is safe, MARIE blows a good-bye kiss to him and joins LOLA in the kitchen. But Doc is coming in the front door just as TURK starts to go out. There is a moment of blind embarrassment, during which Doc only looks stupefied and TURK, after mumbling an unintelligible apology, runs out. First Doc is mystified, trying to figure it all out. His face looks more and more troubled. Meanwhile, MARIE and LOLA are talking in the kitchen.]

Marie. Boo!

[Sneaking up behind LOLA at back porch.]

Lola. [Jumping around.] Heavens! You scared me, Marie. You up already?

Marie. Yah.

Lola. This is Saturday. You could sleep as late as you wanted.

Marie. I thought I'd get up early and help you.

[Pouring a cup of coffee.]

Lola. Honey, I'd sure appreciate it. You can put up the table in the living room, after you've had your breakfast. That's where we'll eat. Then you can help me set it.

[Doc closes door.]

Marie. O.K.

Lola. Want a sweet roll?

Marie. I don't think so. Turk and I had so much beer last night. He got kinda tight.

Lola. He shouldn't do that, Marie.

Marie. [Starts for living room.] Just keep the coffee hot for me. I'll want another cup in a minute. [Stops on seeing Doc.]

Why, Dr. Delaney. I thought you'd gone.

Doc. [In his usual manner.] Good morning, Marie.

[But not looking at her.]

Marie. [She immediately wonders.] Why

—why—how long have you been here, Doc?

Doc. Just got here, just this minute.

Lola. That you, Daddy?

[Comes in.]

Doc. It's me.

Lola. What are you doing back?

Doc. I—I just thought I'd feel better—I

I took a glass of soda water—

Lola. I'm afraid you're not well, Daddy.

Doc. I'm all right. [Starts for kitchen.]

Lola. [Helping MARIE move table from behind davenport to right center.] The soda's on the drain board.

[Doc goes to kitchen, fixes some soda, but stands a moment, just thinking. Then he sits sipping the soda, as though he were trying to make up his mind about something.]

Lola. Marie, would you help me move the table? It'd be nice now if we had a dining room, wouldn't it? But if we had a dining room, I guess we wouldn't have you, Marie. It was my idea to turn the dining room into a bedroom and rent it. I thought of lots of things to do for extra money—a few years ago—when Doc was so—so sick.

[They set up table. LOLA gets cloth from cabinet up left.]

Marie. This is a lovely tablecloth.

Lola. Irish linen. Doc's mother gave it to us when we got married. She gave us all our silver and china, too. The china's Havenlin. I'm so proud of it. It's the most valuable possession we own. I just washed it—Will you help me bring it in? [Getting china from kitchen.] Doc was sortuva Mama's boy. He was an only child and his mother thought the sun rose and set in him. Didn't she, Docky? She brought Doc up like a real gentleman.

Marie. Where are the napkins?

Lola. Oh, I forgot them. They're so nice I keep them in my bureau drawer with my handkerchiefs. Come upstairs and we'll get them.

[LOLA and MARIE go upstairs. Then, DOC listens to be sure LOLA and MARIE are upstairs, looks cautiously at the whiskey bottle on cabinet shelf, but manages to resist several times. Finally he gives in to temptation, grabs bottle off shelf, then starts wondering how to get past LOLA with it. Finally, it occurs to him to wrap it inside his trench coat, which he gets from closet and carries it over his arm. LOLA and MARIE are heard upstairs and they return to the living room and continue setting table as Doc enters from kitchen on his way out.]

Lola. [Coming downstairs.] Did you ever notice how nice he keeps his fingernails? Not many men think of things like that. And he used to take his mother to church every Sunday.

Marie. [At table.] Oh, Doc's a real gentleman.

Lola. Treats women like they were all beautiful angels. We went together a whole year before he even kissed me. [Doc comes through the living room with coat and bottle,

going to front door.] On your way back to the office now, Docky?

Doc. [*His back to them.*] Yes.

Lola. Aren't you going to kiss me goodbye before you go, Daddy? [*She goes to him and kisses him. MARIE catches Doc's eye and smiles. Then she exits to her room, leaving door open.*] Get home early as you can. I'll need you. We gotta give Bruce a royal welcome.

Doc. Yes, Baby.

Lola. Feeling all right?

Doc. Yes.

Lola. [*In doorway. He is on porch.*] Take care of yourself.

Doc. [*Toneless voice.*] Goodbye.

[*He goes.*]

Lola. [*Coming back to table with pleased expression, which changes to a puzzled look. Calls to MARIE.*] Now that's funny. Why did Doc take his raincoat? It's a beautiful day. There isn't a cloud in sight.

CURTAIN

SCENE II

It is now 5:30.

[*The scene is the same as the preceding except that more finishing touches have been added and the Two WOMEN, still primping the table, lighting the tapers, are dressed in their best. LOLA is arranging the centerpiece.*]

Lola. [*Above table, fixing flowers.*] I just love lilacs, don't you, Marie? [*Takes one and studies it.*] Mrs. Coffman was nice; she let me have all I wanted. [*Looks at it very closely.*] Aren't they pretty? And they smell so sweet. I think they're the nicest flower there is.

Marie. They don't last long.

Lola. [*Respectfully.*] No. Just a few days. Mrs. Coffman's started blooming just day before yesterday.

Marie. By the first of the week they'll all be gone.

Lola. Vanish—they'll vanish into thin air. [*Gayer now.*] Here, Honey, we have them to spare now. Put this in your hair. There. [*MARIE does.*] Mrs. Coffman's been so nice lately. I didn't use to like her. Now where could Doc be? He didn't even come home for lunch.

Marie. [*Gets two chairs from bedroom.*] Mrs. Delaney, you're a peach to go to all this trouble.

Lola. [*Gets salt and pepper.*] Shoot, I'm

gettin' more fun out of it than you are. Do you think Bruce is going to like us?

Marie. If he doesn't, I'll never speak to him again.

Lola. [*Eagerly.*] I'm just dying to meet him. But I feel sorta bad I never got to do anything nice for Turk.

Marie. [*Carefully prying.*] Did—Doc ever say anything to you about Turk—and me?

Lola. About Turk and you? No, Honey. Why?

Marie. I just wondered.

Lola. What if Bruce finds out that you've been going with someone else?

Marie. Bruce and I had a very businesslike understanding before I left for school that we weren't going to sit around lonely just because we were separated.

Lola. Aren't you being kind of mean to Turk?

Marie. I don't think so.

Lola. How's he going to feel when Bruce comes?

Marie. He may be sore for a little while. He'll get over it.

Lola. Won't he feel bad?

Marie. He's had his eye on a pretty little Spanish girl in his history class for a long time. I like Turk, but he's not the marrying kind.

Lola. No! Really?

[*LOLA, with a look of sad wonder on her face, sits right arm of couch. It's been a serious disillusionment.*]

Marie. What's the matter?

Lola. I—I just felt kinda tired.

[*Sharp buzzing of doorbell. MARIE runs to answer it.*]

Marie. That must be Bruce. [*She skips to the mirror, then to door.*] Bruce!

Bruce. [*Entering.*] How are you, Sweet-heart?

Marie. Wonderful.

Bruce. Did you get my wire?

Marie. Sure.

Bruce. You're looking swell.

Marie. Thanks. What took you so long to get here?

Bruce. Well, Honey, I had to go to my hotel and take a bath.

Marie. Bruce, this is Mrs. Delaney.

Bruce. [*Now he gets the cozy quality out of his voice.*] How do you do, Ma'am?

Lola. How d'ya do?

Bruce. Marie has said some very nice things about you in her letters.

Marie. Mrs. Delaney has fixed the grandest dinner for us.

Bruce. Now that was to be my treat. I

have a big expense account now, Honey. I thought we could all go down to the hotel and have dinner there, and celebrate first with a few cocktails.

Lola. Oh, we can have cocktails, too. Excuse me just a minute.

[She hurries to the kitchen and starts looking for the whiskey. BRUCE kisses MARIE. Then she whispers.]

Marie. Now, Bruce, she's been working on this dinner all day. She even cleaned the house for you.

Bruce. Did she?

Marie. And Doc's joining us. You'll like Doc.

Bruce. Honey, are we going to have to stay here the whole evening?

Marie. We just can't eat and run right away. We'll get away as soon as we can.

Bruce. I hope so. I got the raise, Sweetheart. They're giving me new territory.

[LOLA is frantic in the kitchen, having found the bottle missing. She hurries back into the living room.]

Lola. You kids are going to have to entertain yourselves a while 'cause I'm going to be busy in the kitchen. Why don't you turn on the radio, Marie? Get some dance music. I'll shut the door so—so I won't disturb you. *[LOLA does so. Then goes to the telephone.]*

Marie. Come and see my room, Bruce. I've fixed it up just darling. And I've got your picture in the prettiest frame right on my dresser.

[They exit and their voices are heard from the bedroom while LOLA is telephoning.]

Lola. *[At the telephone.]* This is Mrs. Delaney. Is—Doc there? Well, then, is Ed Anderson there? Well, would you give me Ed Anderson's telephone number? You see, he sponsored Doc into the club and helped him—you know—and—and I was a little worried tonight— Oh, thanks. Yes, I've got it. *[She writes down number.]* Could you have Ed Anderson call me if he comes in? Thank you. *[She hangs up. On her face is a dismal expression of fear, anxiety, and doubt. She searches flour bin, icebox, closet. Then she goes into the living room, calling to MARIE and BRUCE as she comes.]* I—I guess we'll go ahead without Doc, Marie.

Marie. *[Enters from her room.]* What's the matter with Doc, Mrs. Delaney?

Lola. Well—he got held up at the office—just one of those things, you know. It's too bad. It would have to happen when I needed him most.

Marie. Sure you don't need any help?

Lola. Huh? Oh, no. I'll make out. Every-

thing's ready. I tell you what I'm going to do. Three's a crowd, so I'm going to be the butler and serve the dinner to you two young lovebirds— *[The telephone rings. MARIE goes into bedroom.]* Pardon me—pardon me just a minute. *[She rushes to telephone, closing the door behind her.]* Hello? Ed? Have you seen Doc? He went out this morning and hasn't come back. We're having company for dinner and he was supposed to be home early— That's not all. This time we've had a quart of whiskey in the kitchen and Doc's never gone near it. I went to get it tonight. I was going to serve some cocktails. It was gone. Yes, I saw it there yesterday. No, I don't think so— He said this morning he had an upset stomach but— Oh would you?— Thank you, Mr. Anderson. Thank you a million times. And you let me know when you find out anything. Yes, I'll be here. Yes. *[Hangs up and crosses back to living room.]* Well, I guess we're all ready.

[Their voices continue in bedroom.]

Bruce. Aren't you going to look at your present?

Marie. Oh, sure; let's get some scissors. *[Enters with BRUCE.]* Mrs. Delaney, we think you should eat with us.

Lola. Oh, no, Honey. I'm not very hungry. Besides, this is the first time you've been together in months and I think you should be alone. Marie, why don't you light the candles, then we'll have just the right atmosphere.

[She goes into kitchen, gets tomato juice glasses from ice box while BRUCE lights the candles.]

Bruce. Do we have to eat by candlelight? I won't be able to see.

Lola. *[Returns.]* Now, Bruce, you sit here. *[He and MARIE sit.]* Isn't that going to be cozy? Dinner for two. Sorry we won't have time for cocktails. Let's have a little music.

[She turns on the radio and a Viennese waltz swells up as the Curtain falls, with LOLA looking at the young people eating.]

CURTAIN

SCENE III

Funeral atmosphere. It is about 5:30 the next morning. The sky is just beginning to get light outside. While inside the room the shadows still cling heavily to the corners. The remains of last night's dinner clutter the table in the living

room. The candles have guttered down to stubs amid the dirty dinner plates, and the lilacs in the centerpiece have wilted. [LOLA is sprawled on the davenport, sleeping. Slowly she awakens and regards the morning light. She gets up and looks about strangely, beginning to show despair for the situation she is in. She wears the same spiffy dress she had on the night before, but it is wrinkled now, and her marcelled coiffure is awry. One silk stocking has twisted loose and falls around her ankle. When she is sufficiently awake to realize her situation, she rushes to the telephone and dials a number.]

Lola. [At telephone. She sounds frantic.] Mr. Anderson? Mr. Anderson, this is Mrs. Delaney again. I'm sorry to call you so early, but I just had to— Did you find Doc?—No, he's not home yet. I don't suppose he'll come home till he's drunk all he can hold and wants to sleep— I don't know what else to think, Mr. Anderson. I'm scared, Mr. Anderson. I'm awful scared. Will you come right over?—Thanks, Mr. Anderson. [Hangs up and goes to kitchen to make coffee. She finds some left from the night before, so turns on the fire to warm it up. She wanders around vaguely, trying to get her thoughts in order, jumping at every sound. Pours herself a cup of coffee, then takes it to living room, sits down right and sips it. Very quietly Doc enters through the back way into the kitchen. He carries a big bottle of whiskey, which he carefully places back in the cabinet, not making a sound—hangs up overcoat, then puts suitcoat on back of chair. Starts to go upstairs. But LOLA speaks.] Doc? That you, Doc?

[Then Doc quietly walks in from kitchen. He is staggering drunk, but he is managing for a few minutes to appear as though he were perfectly sober and nothing had happened. His steps, however, are not too sure and his eyes are like blurred ink pots. LOLA is too frightened to talk. Her mouth is gaping and she is breathless with fear.]

Doc. Good morning, Honey.

Lola. Doc! You all right?

Doc. The morning paper here? I wanta see the morning paper.

Lola. Doc, we don't get a morning paper. You know that.

Doc. Oh, then I suppose I'm drunk or something. That what you're trying to say?

Lola. No, Doc—

Doc. Then give me the morning paper.

Lola. [Scampering to get last night's paper from table left.] Sure, Doc. Here it is. Now you just sit there and be quiet.

Doc. [Resistance rising.] Why shouldn't I be quiet?

Lola. Nothin', Doc—

Doc. [Has trouble unfolding paper. He places it before his face in order not to be seen. But he is too blind even to see. Mockingly.] Nothing, Doc.

Lola. [Cautiously, after a few minute's silence.] Doc, are you all right?

Doc. Of course I'm all right. Why shouldn't I be all right?

Lola. Where you been?

Doc. What's it your business where I been? I been to London to see the Queen. What do you think of that? [Apparently she doesn't know what to think of it.] Just let me alone. That's all I ask. I'm all right.

Lola. [Whimpering.] Doc, what made you do it? You said you'd be home last night—'cause we were having company. Bruce was here and I had a big dinner fixed—and you never came. What was the matter, Doc?

Doc. [Mockingly.] We had a big dinner for Bruce.

Lola. Doc, it was for you, too.

Doc. Well—I don't want it.

Lola. Don't get mad, Doc.

Doc. [Threateningly.] Where's Marie?

Lola. I don't know, Doc. She didn't come in last night. She was out with Bruce.

Doc. [Back to audience.] I suppose you tucked them in bed together and peeked through the keyhole and applauded.

Lola. [Sickened.] Doc, don't talk that way. Bruce is a nice boy. They're gonna get married.

Doc. He probably has to marry her, the poor bastard. Just 'cause she's pretty and he got amorous one day— Just like I had to marry you.

Lola. Oh, Doc.

Doc. You and Marie are both a couple of sluts.

Lola. Doc, please don't talk like that.

Doc. What are you good for? You can't even get up in the morning and cook my breakfast.

Lola. [Mumbling.] I will, Doc. I will after this.

Doc. You won't even sweep the floors till some bozo comes along to make love to Marie, and then you fix things up like Buckingham Palace or a Chinese whorehouse with perfume on the lampbulbs, and flowers, and the gold-trimmed china my mother gave us. We're not going to use

these any more. My mother didn't buy those dishes for whores to eat off of.

[Jerks the cloth off the table, sending the dishes rattling to the floor.]

Lola. Doc! Look what you done.

Doc. Look what I did, not done. I'm going to get me a drink. *[To kitchen.]*

Lola. *[Follows to platform.]* Oh no, Doc! You know what it does to you!

Doc. You're damn right I know what it does to me. It makes me willing to come home here and look at you, you two-ton old heifer. *[Gets bottle. Takes a long swallow.]* There! And pretty soon I'm going to have another, then another.

Lola. *[With dread.]* Oh, Doc! *[LOLA takes phone. Doc sees this, rushes for the butcher-knife in kitchen cabinet drawer. Not finding it, he gets a hatchet from the back porch.]* Mr. Anderson? Come quick, Mr. Anderson. He's back. He's back! He's got a hatchet!

Doc. God damn you! Get away from that telephone. *[He chases her into living room, where she gets the davenport between them.]* That's right, phone! Tell the world I'm drunk. Tell the whole damn world. Scream your head off, you fat slut. Holler till all the neighbors think I'm beatin' hell outuv you. Where's Bruce now—under Marie's bed? You got all fresh and pretty for him, didn't you? Combed your hair for once— You even washed the back of your neck, and put on a girdle. You were willing to harness all that fat into one bundle.

Lola. *[About to faint under the weight of the crushing accusations.]* Doc, don't say any more— I'd rather you hit me with an axe, Doc— Honest I would. But I can't stand to hear you talk like that.

Doc. I oughta hack off all that fat, and then wait for Marie and chop off those pretty ankles she's always dancing around on— then start lookin' for Turk and fix him too.

Lola. Daddy, you're talking crazy!

Doc. I'm making sense for the first time in my life. You didn't know I knew about it, did you? But I saw him coming outa there. I saw him. You knew about it all the time and thought you were hidin' something—

Lola. Daddy, I didn't know anything about it at all. Honest, Daddy.

Doc. Then you're the one that's crazy, if you think I didn't know. You were running a regular house, weren't you? It's probably been going on for years, ever since we were married.

[He lunges for her. She breaks for

kitchen. They struggle in front of sink.]

Lola. Doc, it's not so; it's not so. You gotta believe me, Doc.

Doc. You're lyin'. But none a that's gonna happen any more. I'm gonna fix you now, once and for all—

Lola. Doc—don't do that to me. *[LOLA, in a frenzy of fear clutches him around the neck, holding arm with axe by his side.]* Remember, Doc. It's me, Lola! You said I was the prettiest girl you ever saw. Remember, Doc! It's me! Lola!

Doc. *[The memory has overpowered him. He collapses, slowly mumbling.]* Lola—my pretty Lola.

[He passes out on the floor. LOLA stands, now, as though in a trance. Quietly MRS. COFFMAN comes creeping in through the back way.]

Mrs. Coffman. *[Calling softly.]* Mrs. Delaney! *[LOLA doesn't even hear. MRS. COFFMAN comes on in.]* Mrs. Delaney!—Here you are, Lady. I heard screaming and I was frightened for you.

Lola. I—I'll be all right—some men are comin' pretty soon; everything'll be all right.

Mrs. Coffman. I'll stay until they get here.

Lola. *[Feeling a sudden need.]* Would you—would you please, Mrs. Coffman?

[Breaks into sobs.]

Mrs. Coffman. Of course, Lady. *[Regarding Doc.]* The Doctor got "sick" again?

Lola. *[Mumbling.]* Some men—'ll be here pretty soon—

Mrs. Coffman. I'll try to straighten things up before they get here—

[She rights chair, hangs up telephone and picks up the axe, which she is holding when ED ANDERSON and ELMO HUSTON enter front door unannounced. They are experienced AA's. Neatly dressed businessmen approaching middle-age.]

Ed. Pardon us for walking right in, Mrs. Delaney, but I didn't want to waste a second. *[To kitchen. Kneels at Doc.]*

Lola. *[Weakly.]* —it's all right—

[Both MEN observe DOC on the floor, and their expressions hold understanding mixed with a feeling of irony. There is even a slight smile of irony on ED's face. They have developed the surgeon's objectivity.]

Ed. Where is the hatchet? *[To ELMO, as though appraising Doc's condition.]* What do you think, Elmo?

Elmo. We can't leave him here if he's gonna play around with hatchets.

Ed. Give me a hand, Elmo. We'll get him to sit up and then try to talk some sense into him. [*They struggle with the lumpy body, Doc grunting his resistance.*] Come on, Doc, old boy. It's Ed and Elmo. We're going to take care of you.

[*They seat him at table.*]

Doc. [*Through a thick fog.*] Lemme alone.

Ed. Wake up. We're taking you away from here.

Doc. Lemme 'lone, God damn it.

[*Falls forward—head on table.*]

Elmo. [*To MRS. COFFMAN.*] Is there any coffee?

Mrs. Coffman. I think so. I'll see.

[*To stove with cup from drainboard. Lights fire under coffee, and waits for it to get heated.*]

Ed. He's way beyond coffee.

Elmo. It'll help some. Get something hot into his stomach.

Ed. —if we could get him to eat. How 'bout some hot food, Doc?

[*Doc gestures and they don't push the matter.*]

Elmo. City hospital, Ed?

Ed. I guess that's what it will have to be.

Lola. Where are you going to take him?

[*ELMO goes to telephone—speaks quietly to City Hospital.*]

Ed. Don't know. Wanta talk to him first.

Mrs. Coffman. [*Coming with the coffee.*] Here's the coffee.

Ed. [*Taking cup.*] Hold him, Elmo, while I make him swallow this.

Elmo. Come on, Doc, drink your coffee.

Doc. [*He only blubbers. After the coffee is down.*] Uh—what—what's goin' on here?

Ed. It's me, Doc. Your old friend Ed. I got Elmo with me.

Doc. [*Twisting his face painfully.*] Get out, both of you. Lemme 'lone.

Ed. [*With certainty.*] We're takin' you with us, Doc.

Doc. Hell you are. I'm all right. I just had a little slip. We all have slips—

Ed. Sometimes, Doc, but we gotta get over 'em.

Doc. I'll be O.K. Just gimme a day to sober up. I'll be as good as new.

Ed. Remember the last time, Doc? You said you'd be all right in the morning and we found you with a broken collar bone. Come on.

Doc. Boys, I'll be all right. Now lemme alone.

Ed. How much has he had, Mrs. Delaney?

Lola. I don't know. He had a quart when

he left here yesterday and he didn't get home till now.

Ed. He's probably been through a couple of quarts. He's been dry for a long time. It's going to hit him pretty hard. Yah, he'll be a pretty sick man for a few days. [*Louder to Doc, as though he were talking to a deaf man.*] Wanta go to the City Hospital, Doc?

Doc. [*This has a sobering effect on him. He looks about him furtively for possible escape.*] No—no, boys. Don't take me there. That's a torture chamber. No, Ed. You wouldn't do that to me.

Ed. They'll sober you up.

Doc. Ed, I been there; I've seen the place. That's where they take the crazy people. You can't do that to me, Ed.

Ed. Well, you're crazy, aren't you? Goin' after your wife with a hatchet.

[*They lift Doc to his feet. Doc looks with dismal pleading in his eyes at LOLA, who has her face in her hands.*]

Doc. [*So plaintive, a sob in his voice.*] Honey! Honey! [*LOLA can't look at him. Now Doc tries to make a getaway, bolting blindly into the living room before the Two MEN catch him and hold him in front of table.*] Honey, don't let 'em take me there. They'll believe you. Tell 'em you won't let me take a drink.

Lola. Isn't there any place else you could take him?

Ed. Private sanitariums cost a lotta dough.

Lola. I got forty dollars in the kitchen.

Ed. That won't be near enough.

Doc. I'll be at the meeting tomorrow night sober as you are now.

Ed. [*To LOLA.*] All the king's horses couldn't keep him from takin' another drink now, Mrs. Delaney. He got himself into this; he's gotta sweat it out.

Doc. I won't go to the City Hospital. That's where they take the crazy people.

[*Stumbles into chair down right.*]

Ed. [*Using all his patience now.*] Look, Doc. Elmo and I are your friends. You know that. Now if you don't come along peacefully, we're going to call the cops and you'll have to wear off this jag in the cooler. How'd you like that? [*Doc is as though stunned.*] The important thing is for you to get sober.

Doc. I don't wanta go.

Ed. The City Hospital or the City Jail. Take your choice. We're not going to leave you here. Come on, Elmo.

[*They grab hold of him.*]

Doc. [*Has collected himself and now*

given in.] O.K., boys. Gimme another drink and I'll go.

Lola. Oh no, Doc.

Ed. Might as well humor him, Ma'am. Another few drinks couldn't make much difference now.

[MRS. COFFMAN runs for bottle and glass in cabinet, comes right back with them, hands them to LOLA.]

Ed. O.K., Doc, we're goin' to give you a drink. Take a good one; it's gonna be your last for a long time to come. [ED takes the bottle, removes the cork and gives Doc a glass of whiskey. Doc takes his fill, straight, coming up once or twice for air. Then Ed takes the bottle from him and hands it to LOLA.] They'll keep him three or four days, Mrs. Delaney; then he'll be home again, good as new. [Modestly.] I—I don't want to pry into personal affairs, Ma'am—but he'll need you then, pretty bad—

Lola. I know.

Ed. Come on, Doc. Let's go.

[ED has a hold of Doc's coat sleeve, trying to maneuver him. A faraway look is in Doc's eyes, a dazed look containing panic and fear. He gets to his feet.]

Doc. [Struggling to sound reasonable.]

Just a minute, boys—

Ed. What's the matter?

Doc. I—I wanta glass of water.

Ed. You'll get a glass of water later. Come on.

Doc. [Beginning to twist a little in Ed's grasp.] —a glass of water—that's all—

[One furious, quick twist of his body and he eludes Ed.]

Ed. Quick, Elmo.

[ELMO acts fast and they get Doc before he gets away. Then Doc struggles with all his might, kicking and screaming like a pampered child, Ed and ELMO holding him tightly to usher him out.]

Doc. [As he is led out.] Don't let 'em take me there. Don't take me there. Stop them, somebody. Stop them. That's where they take the crazy people. Oh God, stop them, somebody. Stop them.

[LOLA looks on blankly while Ed and ELMO depart with DOC. Sits down right. Now there are several moments of deep silence.]

Mrs. Coffman. [Clears up. Very softly.] Is there anything more I can do for you now, Mrs. Delaney?

Lola. I guess not.

Mrs. Coffman. [Puts a hand on LOLA'S

shoulder.] Get busy, Lady. Get busy and forget it.

Lola. Yes—I'll get busy right away. Thanks, Mrs. Coffman.

Mrs. Coffman. I better go. I've got to make breakfast for the children. If you want me for anything, let me know.

Lola. Yes—yes— Goodbye, Mrs. Coffman.

[MRS. COFFMAN exits back door. LOLA is too exhausted to move from the big chair. At first she can't even cry; then the tears come slowly, softly. In a few moments BRUCE and MARIE enter, bright and merry. LOLA turns her head slightly to regard them as creatures from another planet.]

Marie. [Springing into room.] Congratulate me, Mrs. Delaney. [BRUCE follows.]

Lola. Huh?

Marie. We're going to be married.

Lola. Married? [It barely registers.]

Marie. [Showing ring.] Here it is. My engagement ring.

[MARIE and BRUCE are too engrossed in their own happiness to notice LOLA'S stupor.]

Lola. That's lovely—lovely.

Marie. We've had the most wonderful time. We danced all night and then drove out to the lake and saw the sun rise.

Lola. That's nice.

Marie. We've made all our plans. I'm quitting school and flying back to Cincinnati with Bruce this afternoon. His mother has invited me to visit them before I go home. Isn't that wonderful?

Lola. Yes—yes, indeed.

Marie. Going to miss me?

Lola. Yes, of course, Marie. We'll miss you very much— Uh—congratulations.

Marie. Thanks, Mrs. Delaney. [Crosses up to bedroom door.] Come on, Bruce, help me get my stuff. Mrs. Delaney, would you throw everything into a big box and send it to me at home? We haven't had breakfast yet. We're going down to the hotel and celebrate.

Bruce. I'm sorry we're in such a hurry, but we've got a taxi waiting.

[They go into bedroom.]

Lola. [To telephone, dials.] Long Distance? I want to talk to Green Valley 223. Yes. This is Delmar 1887.

[She hangs up, crosses down. As she gets below table, MARIE comes from bedroom, followed by BRUCE, who carries suitcase.]

Marie. Mrs. Delaney, I sure hate to say

goodbye to you. You've been so wonderful to me. But Bruce says I can come and visit you once in a while, didn't you, Bruce?

Bruce. Sure thing.

Lola. You're going?

Marie. We're going downtown and have our breakfast, then do a little shopping and catch our plane. And thanks for everything, Mrs. Delaney.

Bruce. It was very nice of you to have us to dinner.

Lola. Dinner? Oh, don't mention it.

Marie. [To LOLA.] There isn't much time for goodbye now, but I just want you to know Bruce and I wish you the best of everything. You and Doc both. Tell Doc goodbye for me, will you, and remember, I think you're both a couple peaches.

Bruce. Hurry, Honey.

Marie. 'Bye, Mrs. Delaney!

[She goes out door.]

Bruce. 'Bye, Mrs. Delaney. Thanks for being nice to my girl.

[He goes out and off porch with MARIE.]

Lola. [Waves. The telephone rings. She goes to it quickly.] Hello. Hello, Mom. It's Lola, Mom. How are you? Mom, Doc's sick again. Do you think Dad would let me come home for a while? I'm awfully unhappy, Mom. Do you think—just till I made up my mind?—All right. No, I guess it wouldn't do any good for you to come here—I—I'll let you know what I decide to do. That's all, Mom. Thanks. Tell Daddy hello.

[She hangs up.]

CURTAIN

SCENE IV

It is morning, a week later. The house is neat again, as in Act One, Scene II.

[LOLA is dusting in the living room as MRS. COFFMAN enters from back door.]

Mrs. Coffman. Mrs. Delaney! Good morning, Mrs. Delaney.

Lola. Come in, Mrs. Coffman.

Mrs. Coffman. [Coming in.] It's a fine day for the games. I've got a box lunch ready, and I'm taking all the kids to the Stadium. My boy's got a ticket for you, too. You better get dressed and come with us.

Lola. Thanks, Mrs. Coffman, but I've got work to do.

Mrs. Coffman. But it's such a big day. The Spring Relays—All the athletes from the colleges are supposed to be there.

Lola. Oh yes. You know that boy Turk who used to come here to see Marie—he's one of the big stars.

Mrs. Coffman. Is that so? Come on—do. We've got a ticket for you—

Lola. Oh no, I have to stay here and clean up the house. Doc may be coming home today. I talked to him on the phone. He wasn't sure what time they'd let him out, but I wanta have the place all nice for him.

Mrs. Coffman. Well, I'll tell you all about it when I come home. Everybody and his brother will be there.

Lola. Yes, do, and have a good time.

Mrs. Coffman. 'Bye, Mrs. Delaney.

Lola. 'Bye.

[MRS. COFFMAN leaves, and LOLA goes into kitchen. The MAILMAN comes onto porch and leaves a letter, but LOLA doesn't even know he's there. Then the MILKMAN knocks on the back door.]

Lola. Come in.

Milkman. [Entering with arm full of bottles, etc.] I see you checked the list, Lady. You've got a lot of extras.

Lola. Ya—I think my husband's coming home.

Milkman. [He puts the supplies on table, then pulls out magazine.] Remember, I told you my picture was going to appear in *Strength and Health*. [Showing her magazine.] Well, see that pile of muscles? That's me.

Lola. [Totally without enthusiasm.] My goodness. You got your picture in a magazine.

Milkman. Yes, Ma'am. See what it says about my chest development? For the greatest self-improvement in a three months' period.

Lola. Goodness sakes. You'll be famous, won't you?

Milkman. If I keep busy on these bar-bells. I'm working now for "muscular separation."

Lola. That's nice.

Milkman. [Cheerily.] Well, good day, Ma'am.

Lola. You forgot your magazine.

Milkman. That's for you. [Exits.]

[LOLA puts away the supplies in the ice-box. Then Doc comes in the front door carrying the little suitcase she previously packed for him. Doc is himself again. His quiet manner, his serious demeanor, are the same as before. LOLA is shocked by his sudden appearance. She jumps and can't help showing her fright.]

Lola. Docky!

[Without thinking, she assumes an at-

titute of fear. Doc observes this and it obviously pains him.]

Doc. Good morning, Honey. [Pause.]

Lola. [On platform.] Are—are you all right, Doc?

Doc. Yes, I'm all right. [An awkward pause. Then Doc tries to reassure her.] Honest, I'm all right, Honey. Please don't stand there like that—like I was gonna—gonna—

Lola. [Tries to relax.] I'm sorry, Doc.

Doc. How you been?

Lola. Oh, I been all right, Doc. Fine.

Doc. Any news?

Lola. I told you about Marie—over the phone.

Doc. Yah.

Lola. He was a very nice boy, Doc. Very nice.

Doc. That's good. I hope they'll be happy.

Lola. [Trying to sound bright.] She said—maybe she'd come back and visit us sometime. That's what she said.

Doc. [Pause.] It—it's good to be home.

Lola. Is it, Daddy?

Doc. Yah.

[Beginning to choke up just a little.]

Lola. Did everything go all right—I mean—did they treat you well and—

Doc. [Now loses control of his feelings. Tears in his eyes, he all but lunges at her, gripping her arms, drilling his head into her bosom.] Honey, don't ever leave me. Please don't ever leave me. If you do, they'd have to keep me down at that place all the time. I don't know what I said to you or what I did. I can't remember hardly anything. But please forgive me—please—please— And I'll try to make everything up.

Lola. [There is surprise on her face and new contentment. She becomes almost angelic in demeanor. Tenderly she places a soft hand on his head.] Daddy! Why, of course I'll never leave you. [A smile of satisfaction.] You're all I've got. You're all I ever had.

Doc. [Collecting himself now. Very tenderly he kisses her. LOLA sits beside Doc.] I—I feel better—already.

Lola. [Almost gay.] So do I. Have you had your breakfast?

Doc. No. The food there was terrible. When they told me I could go this morning, I decided to wait and fix myself breakfast here.

Lola. [Happily.] Come on out in the kitchen and I'll get you a nice, big breakfast. I'll scramble some eggs and— You see I've got the place all cleaned up just the way you like it. [Doc goes to kitchen.] Now you sit down here and I'll get your fruit juice.

[He sits and she gets fruit juice from refrigerator.] I've got bacon this morning, too. My, it's expensive now. And I'll light the oven and make you some toast, and here's some orange marmalade, and—

Doc. [With a new feeling of control.] Fruit juice. I'll need lots of it for a while. The doctor said it would restore the vitamins. You see, that damn whiskey kills all the vitamins in your system, eats up all the sugar in your kidneys. They came around every morning and shot vitamins in my arm. Oh, it didn't hurt. And the doctor told me to drink a quart of fruit juice every day. And you better get some candy bars for me at the grocery this morning. Doctor said to eat lots of candy, try to replace the sugar.

Lola. I'll do that, Doc. Here's another glass of this pineapple juice now. I'll get some candy bars first thing.

Doc. The doctor said I should have a hobby. Said I should go out more. That's all that's wrong with me. I thought maybe I'd go hunting once in a while.

Lola. Yes, Doc. And bring home lots of good things to eat.

Doc. I'll get a big bird dog, too. Would you like a sad-looking old bird dog around the house?

Lola. Of course I would. [All her life and energy have been restored.] You know what, Doc? I had another dream last night.

Doc. About Little Sheba?

Lola. Oh, it was about everyone and everything. [In a raptured tone. She gets bacon from ice box and starts to cook it.] Marie and I were going to the Olympics back in our old High School Stadium. There were thousands of people there. There was Turk out in the center of the field throwing the javelin. Every time he'd throw it, the crowd would roar—and you know who the man in charge was? It was my father. Isn't that funny?—but Turk kept changing into someone else all the time. And then my father disqualified him. So he had to sit on the sidelines—and guess who took his place, Daddy? You! You came trotting out there on the field just as big as you please—

Doc. [Smilingly.] How did I do, Baby?

Lola. Fine. You picked the javelin up real careful, like it was awful heavy. But you threw it, Daddy, clear, clear up into the sky. And it never came down again. [Doc looks very pleased with himself. LOLA goes on.] Then it started to rain. And I couldn't find Little Sheba. I almost went crazy looking for her and there were so many people I didn't even know where to look. And you were waiting to take me home. And we walked

and walked through the slush and mud, and people were hurrying all around us and—and—— [*Leaves stove and sits. Sentimental tears come to her eyes.*] But this part is sad, Daddy. All of a sudden I saw Little Sheba—she was lying in the middle of the field—dead—— It made me cry, Doc. No one paid any attention—— I cried and cried. It made me feel so bad, Doc. That sweet little puppy—her curly white fur all smeared with mud, and no one to stop and take care of her——

Doc. Why couldn't you?

Lola. I wanted to, but you wouldn't let me.

You kept saying, "We can't stay here, Honey; we gotta go on. We gotta go on." [*Pause.*] Now, isn't that strange?

Doc. Dreams are funny.

Lola. I don't think Little Sheba's ever coming back, Doc. I'm not going to call her any more.

Doc. Not much point in it, Baby. I guess she's gone for good.

Lola. I'll fix your eggs.

[*She gets up, embraces Doc, and goes to stove. Doc remains at table sipping his fruit juice. The Curtain comes slowly down.*]

THE CRUCIBLE*

By
ARTHUR MILLER

THE TRADITION FOR HISTORY PLAYS, perhaps derived from Shakespeare, calls for poetic form and romantic treatment, with conventional, rather external characterization and "big" scenes. This tradition is well illustrated by Bulwer-Lytton's *Richelieu* in the nineteenth century and Maxwell Anderson's *Elizabeth the Queen* or *Mary of Scotland* in this century. Plainly, Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* is not totally outside this tradition. Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* is perhaps its most brilliant exemplar in non-English literature.

But the modern drama has also developed another kind of history play. This concentrates on psychology and deeper characterization; it becomes a study of the hero in his time. One such is Shaw's *Saint Joan*; another is Sherwood's *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*. Compared with the traditional history play, these are less theatrical, demand less identification with protagonist, but they give greater intellectual satisfaction and they do more to enrich the understanding.

Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* has a bearing toward history not found in either of these classes, but it represents a kind of play our time has produced in profusion. The theory underlying such plays is that art is a weapon to direct the minds and emotions of audiences deliberately toward action the writer desires. *The Crucible* appeared when the United States public was much agitated over the investigation conducted by Senator Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin into Communism in government and public affairs. Miller says in the preface to his *Collected Plays* that this investigation and the accompanying public excitement led to his writing

The Crucible, though the Salem witch trials had interested him for many years. He felt that the emotional state of the country in 1953 was like the emotional state of Salem Village in 1692, and that he could show the terrible consequences of that state by writing a vigorous play. He wanted *The Crucible*, in short, to be a weapon against a present evil in society. It aimed more at making its audiences repent their approval of "McCarthyism" or at intensifying their disapproval than at illuminating their understanding of history.

Probably *The Crucible* was not a successful weapon. Perhaps American audiences did not see much likeness between independent John Proctor and saintly Rebecca Nurse as sufferers from public hysteria and the rather indistinct victims of the McCarthy investigation. The vividness of Miller's historical art may have made his blows at the present less telling. Also, that witchcraft and Communism as threats to a society were equally unreal and imaginary was hard for any American audience to see. If *The Crucible* failed as a weapon, it probably deserved to fail. If it succeeded anywhere, it succeeded in the domain of art, not politics, despite Miller's wish for it. *The Crucible* has been played in London, in Paris, where it ran for more than a year, in West Germany, and in Italy. It was adapted for motion pictures in France by Jean-Paul Sartre. Some of the French enthusiasm for the play may have been anti-American, which would not be Miller's wish, but would be a striking instance of how art conceived as a weapon could become a boomerang.

Not as politics, therefore, but as art, whatever its author intended, *The Crucible* fails or succeeds. As art it transforms history, not into a moral lesson about a passing political excitement, but into a revelation of the strange ways of the human heart and mind. A child not yet born could grow up to read *The Crucible* and be horrified, though McCarthy and Communism and all the agitations of their day were less than dreams to him.

* Copyright 1952, 1953 by Arthur Miller. Reprinted by permission of The Viking Press, Inc. All rights reserved: no public or private performance of the play, professional or amateur, may be given, no film, radio or television use or public reading, without authorization from the author's representative, MCA Management, Ltd., 598 Madison Ave., New York 22. For permission to reprint excerpts from the play, address The Viking Press, Inc., 625 Madison Ave., New York 22.

ARTHUR MILLER

Born 1915, New York City.

1938, B.A., University of Michigan. As an undergraduate, won the Avery Hopwood Prize for student playwriting in 1936, 1937, and the Theatre Guild National Award in 1938.

1938-1944, Writing, first for Federal Theatre Project, then for radio, then for motion pictures. Exempt from military service for physical disability.

1944, Published first book, *Situation Normal*, about the war.

1945, Published *Focus*, novel about anti-Semitism.

1947, *All My Sons* won New York Drama Critics' Award, Antoinette Perry Award, Donaldson Award.

1949, *Death of a Salesman* won Pulitzer Prize, New York Drama Critics' Award.

1956, Divorced first wife, married Marilyn Monroe, actress.

1957, Found in contempt of Congress for refusing to identify persons known to him as Communists, but conviction reversed on appeal, 1958.

PLAYS

1936 *The Grass Still Grows*. 1944 *That They May Win* (one act). 1944 *The Man Who Had All the Luck*. 1947 *All My Sons*. 1949 *Death of a Salesman*. 1950 Adaptation of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*. 1953 *The Crucible*. 1955 *A Memory of Two Mondays* (one act) and *A View from the Bridge* (one act). 1956 *A View from the Bridge* (full length version).

WRITINGS ON DRAMA

Preface to *Death of a Salesman*, 1949. "Journey to 'The Crucible'," *The New York*

Times, Feb. 8, 1953, II.3.1. "Picking a Cast," *The New York Times*, Aug. 21, 1955, II.1.1. "American Theater," *Holiday*, XVII (Jan. 1955), 90-98. "A View of One-Acters," *The New York Times*, Sept. 25, 1955, II.1.6. "The Family in Modern Drama," *The Atlantic Monthly*, CXCVII (April 1956), 35-41. Preface to *A View from the Bridge*, 1956. "Concerning the Boom," in *International Theatre Annual*, I, ed. Harold Hobson, 1956. Preface to *Collected Plays*, 1957. "Brewed in 'The Crucible,'" *The New York Times*, March 9, 1958, II.3.1. "The Shadows of the Gods," *Harper's Magazine*, CCXVII (August 1958), 35-43.

THE CRUCIBLE

A NOTE ON THE HISTORICAL ACCURACY OF THIS PLAY

This play is not history in the sense in which the word is used by the academic historian. Dramatic purposes have sometimes required many characters to be fused into one; the number of girls involved in the "crying-out" has been reduced; Abigail's age has been raised; while there were several judges of almost equal authority, I have symbolized them all in Hathorne and Danforth. However, I believe that the reader will discover here the essential nature of one of the strangest and most awful chapters in human history. The fate of each character is exactly that of his historical model, and there

is no one in the drama who did not play a similar—and in some cases exactly the same—role in history.

As for the characters of the persons, little is known about most of them excepting what may be surmised from a few letters, the trial record, certain broadsides written at the time, and references to their conduct in sources of varying reliability. They may therefore be taken as creations of my own, drawn to the best of my ability in conformity with their known behavior, except as indicated in the commentary I have written for this text.

ACT ONE (AN OVERTURE)

A small upper bedroom in the home of REVEREND SAMUEL PARRIS, Salem, Massachusetts, in the spring of the year 1692.

There is a narrow window at the left. Through its leaded panes the morning sunlight streams. A candle still burns near the bed, which is at the right. A chest, a chair, and a small table are the other furnishings. At the back a door opens on the landing of the stairway to the ground floor. The room gives off an air of clean spareness. The roof rafters are exposed, and the wood colors are raw and unmellowed.

[As the curtain rises, REVEREND PARRIS is discovered kneeling beside the bed, evidently in prayer. His daughter, BETTY PARRIS, aged ten, is lying on the bed, inert.]

[At the time of these events PARRIS was in his middle forties. In history he cut a villainous path, and there is very little good to be said for him. He believed he was being persecuted wherever he went, despite his best efforts to win people and God to his side. In meeting, he felt insulted if someone rose to shut the door without first asking his permission. He was a widower with no interest in children, or talent with them.

He regarded them as young adults, and until this strange crisis he, like the rest of Salem, never conceived that the children were anything but thankful for being permitted to walk straight, eyes slightly lowered, arms at the sides, and mouths shut until bidden to speak.

His house stood in the "town"—but we today would hardly call it a village. The meeting house was nearby, and from this point outward—toward the bay or inland—there were a few small-windowed, dark houses snuggling against the raw Massachusetts winter. Salem had been established hardly forty years before. To the European world the whole province was a barbaric frontier inhabited by a sect of fanatics, who, nevertheless, were shipping out products of slowly increasing quantity and value. No one can really know what their lives were like. They had no novelists—and would not have permitted anyone to read a novel if one were handy. Their creed forbade anything resembling a theater or "vain enjoyment." They did not celebrate Christmas, and a holiday from work meant only that they must concentrate even more upon prayer. Which is not to say that nothing broke into this strict and somber way

of life. When a new farmhouse was built, friends assembled to "raise the roof," and there would be special foods cooked and probably some potent cider passed around. There was a good supply of ne'er-do-wells in Salem, who dallied at the shovelboard in Bridget Bishop's tavern. Probably more than the creed, hard work kept the morals of the place from spoiling, for the people were forced to fight the land like heroes for every grain of corn, and no man had very much time for fooling around.

That there were some jokers, however, is indicated by the practice of appointing a two-man patrol whose duty was to "walk forth in the time of God's worship to take notice of such as either lye about the meeting house, without attending to the word and ordinances, or that lye at home or in the fields without giving good account thereof, and to take the names of such persons, and to present them to the magistrates, whereby they may be accordingly proceeded against." This predilection for minding other people's business was time-honored among the people of Salem, and it undoubtedly created many of the suspicions which were to feed the coming madness. It was also, in my opinion, one of the things that a JOHN PROCTOR would rebel against, for the time of the armed camp had almost passed, and since the country was reasonably—although not wholly—safe, the old disciplines were beginning to rankle. But, as in all such matters, the issue was not clear-cut, for danger was still a possibility, and in unity still lay the best promise of safety.

The edge of the wilderness was close by. The American continent stretched endlessly west, and it was full of mystery for them. It stood, dark and threatening, over their shoulders night and day, for out of it Indian tribes marauded from time to time, and REVEREND PARRIS had parishioners who had lost relatives to these heathen.

The parochial snobbery of these people was partly responsible for their failure to convert the Indians. Probably they also preferred to take land from heathens rather than from fellow Christians. At any rate, very few Indians were converted, and the Salem folk believed that the virgin forest was the Devil's last preserve, his home base

and the citadel of his final stand. To the best of their knowledge the American forest was the last place on earth that was not paying homage to God.

For these reasons, among others, they carried about an air of innate resistance, even of persecution. Their fathers had, of course, been persecuted in England. So now they and their church found it necessary to deny any other sect its freedom, lest their New Jerusalem be defiled and corrupted by wrong ways and deceitful ideas.

They believed, in short, that they held in their steady hands the candle that would light the world. We have inherited this belief, and it has helped and hurt us. It helped them with the discipline it gave them. They were a dedicated folk, by and large, and they had to be to survive the life they had chosen or been born into in this country. The proof of their belief's value to them may be taken from the opposite character of the first Jamestown settlement, farther south, in Virginia. The Englishmen who landed there were motivated mainly by a hunt for profit. They had thought to pick off the wealth of the new country and then return rich to England. They were a band of individualists, and a much more ingratiating group than the Massachusetts men. But Virginia destroyed them. Massachusetts tried to kill off the Puritans, but they combined; they set up a communal society which, in the beginning, was little more than an armed camp with an autocratic and very devoted leadership. It was, however, an autocracy by consent, for they were united from top to bottom by a commonly held ideology whose perpetuation was the reason and justification for all their sufferings. So their self-denial, their purposefulness, their suspicion of all vain pursuits, their hard-handed justice, were altogether perfect instruments for the conquest of this space so antagonistic to man.

But the people of Salem in 1692 were not quite the dedicated folk that arrived on the Mayflower. A vast differentiation had taken place, and in their own time a revolution had unseated the royal government and substituted a junta which was at this moment in power. The times, to their eyes, must have been out of joint, and to the common folk must have seemed as

insoluble and complicated as do ours today. It is not hard to see how easily many could have been led to believe that the time of confusion had been brought upon them by deep and darkling forces. No hint of such speculation appears on the court record, but social disorder in any age breeds such mystical suspicions, and when, as in Salem, wonders are brought forth from below the social surface, it is too much to expect people to hold back very long from laying on the victims with all the force of their frustrations.

The Salem tragedy, which is about to begin in these pages, developed from a paradox. It is a paradox in whose grip we still live, and there is no prospect yet that we will discover its resolution. Simply, it was this: for good purposes, even high purposes, the people of Salem developed a theocracy, a combine of state and religious power whose function was to keep the community together, and to prevent any kind of disunity that might open it to destruction by material or ideological enemies. It was forged for a necessary purpose and accomplished that purpose. But all organization is and must be grounded on the idea of exclusion and prohibition, just as two objects cannot occupy the same space. Evidently the time came in New England when the repressions of order were heavier than seemed warranted by the dangers against which the order was organized. The witch-hunt was a perverse manifestation of the panic which set in among all classes when the balance began to turn toward greater individual freedom.

When one rises above the individual villainy displayed, one can only pity them all, just as we shall be pitied someday. It is still impossible for man to organize his social life without repressions, and the balance has yet to be struck between order and freedom.

The witch-hunt was not, however, a mere repression. It was also, and as importantly, a long overdue opportunity for everyone so inclined to express publicly his guilt and sins, under the cover of accusations against the victims. It suddenly became possible—and patriotic and holy—for a man to say that MARTHA COREY had come into his bedroom at night, and that, while his wife was sleeping at his side, MARTHA laid herself down on his chest and “nearly

suffocated him.” Of course it was her spirit only, but his satisfaction at confessing himself was no lighter than if it had been MARTHA herself. One could not ordinarily speak such things in public.

Long-held hatred of neighbors could now be openly expressed, and vengeance taken, despite the Bible’s charitable injunctions. Land-lust which had been expressed before by constant bickering over boundaries and deeds could now be elevated to the arena of morality; one could cry witch against one’s neighbor and feel perfectly justified in the bargain. Old scores could be settled on a plane of heavenly combat between Lucifer and the Lord; suspicions and the envy of the miserable toward the happy could and did burst out in the general revenge.]

[REVEREND PARRIS is praying now, and, though we cannot hear his words, a sense of his confusion hangs about him. He mumbles, then seems about to weep; then he weeps, then prays again; but his daughter does not stir on the bed.

The door opens, and his Negro slave enters. TITUBA is in her forties. PARRIS brought her with him from Barbados, where he spent some years as a merchant before entering the ministry. She enters as one does who can no longer bear to be barred from the sight of her beloved, but she is also very frightened because her slave sense has warned her that, as always, trouble in this house eventually lands on her back.]

Tituba. [Already taking a step backward.] My Betty be hearty soon?

Parris. Out of here!

Tituba. [Backing to the door.] My Betty not goin’ die . . .

Parris. [Scrambling to his feet in a fury.] Out of my sight! [She is gone.] Out of my— [He is overcome with sobs. He clamps his teeth against them and closes the door and leans against it, exhausted.] Oh, my God! God help me! [Quaking with fear, mumbling to himself through his sobs, he goes to the bed and gently takes BETTY’S hand.] Betty. Child. Dear child. Will you wake, will you open up your eyes! Betty, little one . . .

[He is bending to kneel again when his niece, ABIGAIL WILLIAMS, seventeen, enters—a strikingly beautiful girl, an orphan, with an endless capacity for

dissembling. Now she is all worry and apprehension and propriety.]

Abigail. Uncle? [*He looks to her.*]

Susanna Walcott's here from Doctor Griggs.

Parris. Oh? Let her come, let her come.

Abigail. [*Leaning out the door to call to SUSANNA, who is down the hall a few steps.*]

Come in, Susanna.

[*SUSANNA WALCOTT, a little younger than ABIGAIL, a nervous, hurried girl, enters.*]

Parris. [*Eagerly.*] What does the doctor say, child?

Susanna. [*Craning around PARRIS to get a look at BETTY.*] He bid me come and tell you, reverend sir, that he cannot discover no medicine for it in his books.

Parris. Then he must search on.

Susanna. Aye, sir, he have been searchin' his books since he left you, sir. But he bid me tell you, that you might look to unnatural things for the cause of it.

Parris. [*His eyes going wide.*] No—no. There be no unnatural cause here. Tell him I have sent for Reverend Hale of Beverly, and Mr. Hale will surely confirm that. Let him look to medicine and put out all thought of unnatural causes here. There be none.

Susanna. Aye, sir. He bid me tell you.

[*She turns to go.*]

Abigail. Speak nothin' of it in the village, Susanna.

Parris. Go directly home and speak nothing of unnatural causes.

Susanna. Aye, sir. I pray for her.

[*She goes out.*]

Abigail. Uncle, the rumor of witchcraft is all about; I think you'd best go down and deny it yourself. The parlor's packed with people, sir. I'll sit with her.

Parris. [*Pressed, turns on her.*] And what shall I say to them? That my daughter and my niece I discovered dancing like heathen in the forest?

Abigail. Uncle, we did dance; let you tell them I confessed it—and I'll be whipped if I must be. But they're speakin' of witchcraft. Betty's not witched.

Parris. Abigail, I cannot go before the congregation when I know you have not opened with me. What did you do with her in the forest?

Abigail. We did dance, uncle, and when you leaped out of the bush so suddenly, Betty was frightened and then she fainted. And there's the whole of it.

Parris. Child. Sit you down.

Abigail. [*Quavering, as she sits.*] I would never hurt Betty. I love her dearly.

Parris. Now look you, child, your punish-

ment will come in its time. But if you trafficked with spirits in the forest I must know it now, for surely my enemies will, and they will ruin me with it.

Abigail. But we never conjured spirits.

Parris. Then why can she not move herself since midnight? This child is desperate! [*ABIGAIL lowers her eyes.*] It must come out—my enemies will bring it out. Let me know what you done there. Abigail, do you understand that I have many enemies?

Abigail. I have heard of it, uncle.

Parris. There is a faction that is sworn to drive me from my pulpit. Do you understand that?

Abigail. I think so, sir.

Parris. Now then, in the midst of such disruption, my own household is discovered to be the very center of some obscene practice. Abominations are done in the forest—

Abigail. It were sport, uncle!

Parris. [*Pointing at BETTY.*] You call this sport? [*She lowers her eyes. He pleads.*] Abigail, if you know something that may help the doctor, for God's sake tell it to me. [*She is silent.*] I saw Tituba waving her arms over the fire when I came on you. Why was she doing that? And I heard a screeching and gibberish coming from her mouth. She were swaying like a dumb beast over that fire!

Abigail. She always sings her Barbados songs, and we dance.

Parris. I cannot blink what I saw, Abigail, for my enemies will not blink it. I saw a dress lying on the grass.

Abigail. [*Innocently.*] A dress?

Parris. [*It is very hard to say.*] Aye, a dress. And I thought I saw—someone naked running through the trees!

Abigail. [*In terror.*] No one was naked! You mistake yourself, uncle!

Parris. [*With anger.*] I saw it! [*He moves from her. Then, resolved.*] Now tell me true, Abigail. And I pray you feel the weight of truth upon you, for now my ministry's at stake, my ministry and perhaps your cousin's life. Whatever abomination you have done, give me all of it now, for I dare not be taken unaware when I go before them down there.

Abigail. There is nothin' more. I swear it, uncle.

Parris. [*Studies her, then nods, half convinced.*] Abigail, I have fought here three long years to bend these stiff-necked people to me, and now, just now when some good respect is rising for me in the parish, you compromise my very character. I have given

you a home, child, I have put clothes upon your back—now give me upright answer. Your name in the town—it is entirely white, is it not?

Abigail. [With an edge of resentment.] Why, I am sure it is, sir. There be no blush about my name.

Parris. [To the point.] Abigail, is there any other cause than you have told me, for your being discharged from Goody Proctor's service? I have heard it said, and I tell you as I heard it, that she comes so rarely to the church this year for she will not sit so close to something soiled. What signified that remark?

Abigail. She hates me, uncle, she must, for I would not be her slave. It's a bitter woman, a lying, cold, sniveling woman, and I will not work for such a woman!

Parris. She may be. And yet it has troubled me that you are now seven month out of their house, and in all this time no other family has ever called for your service.

Abigail. They want slaves, not such as I. Let them send to Barbados for that. I will not black my face for any of them! [With ill-concealed resentment at him.] Do you begrudge my bed, uncle?

Parris. No—no.

Abigail. [In a temper.] My name is good in the village! I will not have it said my name is soiled! Goody Proctor is a gossiping liar!

[Enter MRS. ANN PUTNAM. She is a twisted soul of forty-five, a death-ridden woman, haunted by dreams.]

Parris. [As soon as the door begins to open.] No—no, I cannot have anyone. [He sees her, and a certain deference springs into him, although his worry remains.] Why, Goody Putnam, come in.

Mrs. Putnam. [Full of breath, shiny-eyed.] It is a marvel. It is surely a stroke of hell upon you.

Parris. No, Goody Putnam, it is—

Mrs. Putnam. [Glancing at BETTY.] How high did she fly, how high?

Parris. No, no, she never flew—

Mrs. Putnam. [Very pleased with it.] Why, it's sure she did. Mr. Collins saw her goin' over Ingersoll's barn, and come down light as bird, he says!

Parris. Now, look you, Goody Putnam, she never— [Enter THOMAS PUTNAM, a well-to-do, hard-handed landowner, near fifty.] Oh, good morning, Mr. Putnam.

Putnam. It is a providence the thing is out now! It is a providence.

[He goes directly to the bed.]

Parris. What's out, sir, what's—?

[MRS. PUTNAM goes to the bed.]

Putnam. [Looking down at BETTY.] Why, her eyes is closed! Look you, Ann.

Mrs. Putnam. Why, that's strange. [To PARRIS.] Ours is open.

Parris. [Shocked.] Your Ruth is sick?

Mrs. Putnam. [With vicious certainty.] I'd not call it sick; the Devil's touch is heavier than sick. It's death, y'know, it's death drivin' into them, forked and hoofed.

Parris. Oh, pray not! Why, how does Ruth ail?

Mrs. Putnam. She ails as she must—she never waked this morning, but her eyes open and she walks, and hears naught, sees naught, and cannot eat. Her soul is taken, surely.

[PARRIS is struck.]

Putnam. [As though for further details.] They say you've sent for Reverend Hale of Beverly?

Parris. [With dwindling conviction now.] A precaution only. He has much experience in all demonic arts, and I—

Mrs. Putnam. He has indeed; and found a witch in Beverly last year, and let you remember that.

Parris. Now, Goody Ann, they only thought that were a witch, and I am certain there be no element of witchcraft here.

Putnam. No witchcraft! Now look you, Mr. Parris—

Parris. Thomas, Thomas, I pray you, leap not to witchcraft. I know that you—you least of all, Thomas, would ever wish so disastrous a charge laid upon me. We cannot leap to witchcraft. They will howl me out of Salem for such corruption in my house.

[A word about THOMAS PUTNAM. He was a man with many grievances, at least one of which appears justified. Some time before, his wife's brother-in-law, James Bayley, had been turned down as minister of Salem. Bayley had all the qualifications, and a two-thirds vote into the bargain, but a faction stopped his acceptance, for reasons that are not clear.]

THOMAS PUTNAM was the eldest son of the richest man in the village. He had fought the Indians at Narragansett, and was deeply interested in parish affairs. He undoubtedly felt it poor payment that the village should so blatantly disregard his candidate for one of its more important offices, especially since he regarded himself as the intellectual superior of most of the people around him.

His vindictive nature was demonstrated long before the witchcraft began. Another former Salem minister, George Burroughs, had had to borrow money to pay for his wife's funeral, and, since the parish was remiss in his salary, he was soon bankrupt. THOMAS and his brother John had Burroughs jailed for debts the man did not owe. The incident is important only in that Burroughs succeeded in becoming minister where Bayley, THOMAS PUTNAM'S brother-in-law, had been rejected; the motif of resentment is clear here. THOMAS PUTNAM felt that his own name and the honor of his family had been smirched by the village, and he meant to right matters however he could.

Another reason to believe him a deeply embittered man was his attempt to break his father's will, which left a disproportionate amount to a step-brother. As with every other public cause in which he tried to force his way, he failed in this.

So it is not surprising to find that so many accusations against people are in the handwriting of THOMAS PUTNAM, or that his name is so often found as a witness corroborating the supernatural testimony, or that his daughter led the crying-out at the most opportune junctures of the trials, especially when—
But we'll speak of that when we come to it.]

Putnam. [At the moment he is intent upon getting PARRIS, for whom he has only contempt, to move toward the abyss.] Mr. Parris, I have taken your part in all contention here, and I would continue; but I cannot if you hold back in this. There are hurtful, vengeful spirits layin' hands on these children.

Parris. But, Thomas, you cannot—

Putnam. Ann! Tell Mr. Parris what you have done.

Mrs. Putnam. Reverend Parris, I have laid seven babies unbaptized in the earth. Believe me, sir, you never saw more hearty babies born. And yet, each would wither in my arms the very night of their birth. I have spoke nothin', but my heart has clamored intimations. And now, this year, my Ruth, my only—I see her turning strange. A secret child she has become this year, and shrivels like a sucking mouth were pullin' on her life too. And so I thought to send her to your Tituba—

Parris. To Tituba! What may Tituba—? Mrs. Putnam. Tituba knows how to speak to the dead, Mr. Parris.

Parris. Goody Ann, it is a formidable sin to conjure up the dead!

Mrs. Putnam. I take it on my soul, but who else may surely tell us what person murdered my babies?

Parris. [Horried.] Woman!

Mrs. Putnam. They were murdered, Mr. Parris! And mark this proof! Mark it! Last night my Ruth were ever so close to their little spirits; I know it, sir. For how else is she struck dumb now except some power of darkness would stop her mouth? It is a marvelous sign, Mr. Parris!

Putnam. Don't you understand it, sir? There is a murdering witch among us, bound to keep herself in the dark. [PARRIS turns to BETTY, a frantic terror rising in him.] Let your enemies make of it what they will, you cannot blink it more.

Parris. [To ABIGAIL.] Then you were conjuring spirits last night.

Abigail. [Whispering.] Not I, sir—Tituba and Ruth.

Parris. [Turns now, with new fear, and goes to BETTY, looks down at her, and then, gazing off.] Oh, Abigail, what proper payment for my charity! Now I am undone.

Putnam. You are not undone! Let you take hold here. Wait for no one to charge you—declare it yourself. You have discovered witchcraft—

Parris. In my house? In my house, Thomas? They will topple me with this! They will make of it a—

[Enter MERCY LEWIS, the Putnam's servant, a fat, sly, merciless girl of eighteen.]

Mercy. Your pardons. I only thought to see how Betty is.

Putnam. Why aren't you home? Who's with Ruth?

Mercy. Her grandma come. She's improved a little, I think—she gave a powerful sneeze before.

Mrs. Putnam. Ah, there's a sign of life!

Mercy. I'd fear no more, Goody Putnam. It were a grand sneeze; another like it will shake her wits together, I'm sure.

[She goes to the bed to look.]

Parris. Will you leave me now, Thomas? I would pray a while alone.

Abigail. Uncle, you've prayed since midnight. Why do you not go down and—

Parris. No—no. [To PUTNAM.] I have no answer for that crowd. I'll wait till Mr.

Hale arrives. [*To get MRS. PUTNAM to leave.*] If you will, Goody Ann . . .

Putnam. Now look you, sir. Let you strike out against the Devil, and the village will bless you for it! Come down, speak to them—pray with them. They're thirsting for your word, Mister! Surely you'll pray with them.

Parris. [*Swayed.*] I'll lead them in a psalm, but let you say nothing of witchcraft yet. I will not discuss it. The cause is yet unknown. I have had enough contention since I came; I want no more.

Mrs. Putnam. Mercy, you go home to Ruth, d'y'hear?

Mercy. Aye, mum.

[*MRS. PUTNAM goes out.*]

Parris. [*To ABIGAIL.*] If she starts for the window, cry for me at once.

Abigail. I will, uncle.

Parris. [*To PUTNAM.*] There is a terrible power in her arms today.

[*He goes out with PUTNAM.*]

Abigail. [*With hushed trepidation.*] How is Ruth sick?

Mercy. It's weirdish, I know not—she seems to walk like a dead one since last night.

Abigail. [*Turns at once and goes to BETTY, and now, with fear in her voice.*] Betty? [*BETTY doesn't move. She shakes her.*] Now stop this! Betty! Sit up now!

[*BETTY doesn't stir. MERCY comes over.*]

Mercy. Have you tried beatin' her? I gave Ruth a good one and it waked her for a minute. Here, let me have her.

Abigail. [*Holding MERCY back.*] No, he'll be comin' up. Listen, now; if they be questioning us, tell them we danced—I told him as much already.

Mercy. Aye. And what more?

Abigail. He knows Tituba conjured Ruth's sisters to come out of the grave.

Mercy. And what more?

Abigail. He saw you naked.

Mercy. [*Clapping her hands together with a frightened laugh.*] Oh, Jesus!

[*Enter MARY WARREN, breathless. She is seventeen, a subservient, naive, lonely girl.*]

Mary Warren. What'll we do? The village is out! I just come from the farm; the whole country's talkin' witchcraft! They'll be callin' us witches, Abby!

Mercy. [*Pointing and looking at MARY WARREN.*] She means to tell, I know it.

Mary Warren. Abby, we've got to tell. Witchery's a hangin' error, a hangin' like they done in Boston two year ago! We must

tell the truth, Abby! You'll only be whipped for dancin', and the other things!

Abigail. Oh, we'll be whipped!

Mary Warren. I never done none of it, Abby. I only looked!

Mercy. [*Moving menacingly toward MARY.*] Oh, you're a great one for lookin', aren't you, Mary Warren? What a grand peeping courage you have!

[*BETTY, on the bed, whimpers. ABIGAIL turns to her at once.*]

Abigail. Betty? [*She goes to BETTY.*] Now, Betty, dear, wake up now. It's Abigail. [*She sits BETTY up and furiously shakes her.*] I'll beat you, Betty! [*BETTY whimpers.*] My, you seem improving. I talked to your papa and I told him everything. So there's nothing to—

Betty. [*Darts off the bed, frightened of ABIGAIL, and flattens herself against the wall.*] I want my mama!

Abigail. [*With alarm, as she cautiously approaches BETTY.*] What ails you, Betty? Your mama's dead and buried.

Betty. I'll fly to Mama. Let me fly!

[*She raises her arms as though to fly, and streaks for the window, gets one leg out.*]

Abigail. [*Pulling her away from the window.*] I told him everything; he knows now, he knows everything we—

Betty. You drank blood, Abby! You didn't tell him that!

Abigail. Betty, you never say that again! You will never—

Betty. You did, you did! You drank a charm to kill John Proctor's wife! You drank a charm to kill Goody Proctor!

Abigail. [*Smashes her across the face.*] Shut it! Now shut it!

Betty. [*Collapsing on the bed.*] Mama, Mama! [*She dissolves into sobs.*]

Abigail. Now look you. All of you. We danced. And Tituba conjured Ruth Putnam's dead sisters. And that is all. And mark this. Let either of you breathe a word, or the edge of a word, about the other things, and I will come to you in the black of some terrible night and I will bring a pointy reckoning that will shudder you. And you know I can do it; I saw Indians smash my dear parents' heads on the pillow next to mine, and I have seen some reddish work done at night, and I can make you wish you had never seen the sun go down! [*She goes to BETTY and roughly sits her up.*] Now, you—sit up and stop this!

[*But BETTY collapses in her hands and lies inert on the bed.*]

Mary Warren. [*With hysterical fright.*]

What's got her? [ABIGAIL stares in fright at BETTY.] Abby, she's going to die! It's a sin to conjure, and we—

Abigail. [Starting for MARY.] I say shut it, Mary Warren!

[Enter JOHN PROCTOR. On seeing him, MARY WARREN leaps in fright.]

[PROCTOR was a farmer in his middle thirties. He need not have been a partisan of any faction in the town, but there is evidence to suggest that he had a sharp and biting way with hypocrites. He was the kind of man—powerful of body, even-tempered, and not easily led—who cannot refuse support to partisans without drawing their deepest resentment. In PROCTOR's presence a fool felt his foolishness instantly—and a Proctor is always marked for calumny therefore. But as we shall see, the steady manner he displays does not spring from an untroubled soul. He is a sinner, a sinner not only against the moral fashion of the time, but against his own vision of decent conduct. These people had no ritual for the washing away of sins. It is another trait we inherited from them, and it has helped to discipline us as well as to breed hypocrisy among us. PROCTOR, respected and even feared in Salem, has come to regard himself as a kind of fraud. But no hint of this has yet appeared on the surface, and, as he enters from the crowded parlor below, it is a man in his prime we see, with a quiet confidence and an unexpressed, hidden force. MARY WARREN, his servant, can barely speak for embarrassment and fear.]

Mary Warren. Oh! I'm just going home, Mr. Proctor.

Proctor. Be you foolish, Mary Warren? Be you deaf? I forbid you leave the house, did I not? Why shall I pay you? I am looking for you more often than my cows!

Mary Warren. I only come to see the great doings in the world.

Proctor. I'll show you a great doin' on your arse one of these days. Now get you home; my wife is waitin' with your work!

[Trying to retain a shred of dignity, she goes slowly out.]

Mercy Lewis. [Both afraid of him and strangely titillated.] I'd best be off. I have my Ruth to watch. Good morning, Mr. Proctor.

[MERCY sidles out. Since PROCTOR's entrance, ABIGAIL has stood as though on tiptoe, absorbing his presence, wide-

eyed. He glances at her, then goes to BETTY on the bed.]

Abigail. Gah! I'd almost forgot how strong you are, John Proctor!

Proctor. [Looking at ABIGAIL now, the faintest suggestion of a knowing smile on his face.] What's this mischief here?

Abigail. [With a nervous laugh.] Oh, she's only gone silly somehow.

Proctor. The road past my house is a pilgrimage to Salem all morning. The town's mumbling witchcraft.

Abigail. Oh, posh! [Winningly she comes a little closer, with a confidential, wicked air.] We were dancin' in the woods last night, and my uncle leaped in on us. She took fright, is all.

Proctor. [His smile widening.] Ah, you're wicked yet, aren't y'! [A trill of expectant laughter escapes her, and she dares come closer, feverishly looking into his eyes.] You'll be clapped in the stocks before you're twenty. [He takes a step to go, and she springs into his path.]

Abigail. Give me a word, John. A soft word. [Her concentrated desire destroys his smile.]

Proctor. No, no, Abby. That's done with.

Abigail. [Tauntingly.] You come five mile to see a silly girl fly? I know you better.

Proctor. [Setting her firmly out of his path.] I come to see what mischief your uncle's brewin' now. [With final emphasis.] Put it out of mind, Abby.

Abigail. [Grasping his hand before he can release her.] John—I am waitin' for you every night.

Proctor. Abby, I never give you hope to wait for me.

Abigail. [Now beginning to anger—she can't believe it.] I have something better than hope, I think!

Proctor. Abby, you'll put it out of mind. I'll not be comin' for you more.

Abigail. You're surely sportin' with me.

Proctor. You know me better.

Abigail. I know how you clutched my back behind your house and sweated like a stallion whenever I come near! Or did I dream that? It's she put me out, you cannot pretend it were you. I saw your face when she put me out, and you loved me then and you do now!

Proctor. Abby, that's a wild thing to say—

Abigail. A wild thing may say wild things. But not so wild, I think. I have seen you since she put me out; I have seen you nights.

Proctor. I have hardly stepped off my farm this seven month.

Abigail. I have a sense for heat, John, and yours has drawn me to my window, and I have seen you looking up, burning in your loneliness. Do you tell me you've never looked up at my window?

Proctor. I may have looked up.

Abigail. [*Now softening.*] And you must. You are no wintry man. I know you, John. I know you. [*She is weeping.*] I cannot sleep for dreamin'; I cannot dream but I wake and walk about the house as though I'd find you comin' through some door.

[*She clutches him desperately.*]

Proctor. [*Gently pressing her from him, with great sympathy but firmly.*] Child—

Abigail. [*With a flash of anger.*] How do you call me child!

Proctor. Abby, I may think of you softly from time to time. But I will cut off my hand before I'll ever reach for you again. Wipe it out of mind. We never touched, Abby.

Abigail. Aye, but we did.

Proctor. Aye, but we did not.

Abigail. [*With a bitter anger.*] Oh, I marvel how such a strong man may let such a sickly wife be—

Proctor. [*Angered—at himself as well.*] You'll speak nothin' of Elizabeth!

Abigail. She is blackening my name in the village! She is telling lies about me! She is a cold, sniveling woman, and you bend to her! Let her turn you like a—

Proctor. [*Shaking her.*] Do you look for whippin'?

[*A psalm is heard being sung below.*]

Abigail. [*In tears.*] I look for John Proctor that took me from my sleep and put knowledge in my heart! I never knew what pretense Salem was, I never knew the lying lessons I was taught by all these Christian women and their covenanted men! And now you bid me tear the light out of my eyes? I will not, I cannot! You loved me, John Proctor, and whatever sin it is, you love me yet! [*He turns abruptly to go out. She rushes to him.*] John, pity me, pity me!

[*The words "going up to Jesus" are heard in the psalm, and BETTY claps her ears suddenly and whines loudly.*]

Abigail. Betty?

[*She hurries to BETTY, who is now sitting up and screaming. PROCTOR goes to BETTY as ABIGAIL is trying to pull her hands down, calling "Betty!"*]

Proctor. [*Growing unnerved.*] What's she doing? Girl, what ails you? Stop that wailing!

[*The singing has stopped in the midst of this, and now PARRIS rushes in.*]

Parris. What happened? What are you doing to her? Betty!

[*He rushes to the bed, crying, "Betty, Betty!"*] MRS. PUTNAM enters, feverish with curiosity, and with her THOMAS PUTNAM and MERCY LEWIS. PARRIS, at the bed, keeps lightly slapping BETTY's face, while she moans and tries to get up.]

Abigail. She heard you singin' and suddenly she's up and screamin'.

Mrs. Putnam. The psalm! The psalm! She cannot bear to hear the Lord's name!

Parris. No, God forbid. Mercy, run to the doctor! Tell him what's happened here!

[*MERCY LEWIS rushes out.*]

Mrs. Putnam. Mark it for a sign, mark it!

[*REBECCA NURSE, seventy-two, enters. She is white-haired, leaning upon her walking-stick.*]

Putnam. [*Pointing at the whimpering BETTY.*] That is a notorious sign of witchcraft afoot, Goody Nurse, a prodigious sign!

Mrs. Putnam. My mother told me that! When they cannot bear to hear the name of—

Parris. [*Trembling.*] Rebecca, Rebecca, go to her, we're lost. She suddenly cannot bear to hear the Lord's—

[*GILES COREY, eighty-three, enters. He is knotted with muscle, canny, inquisitive, and still powerful.*]

Rebecca. There is hard sickness here, Giles Corey, so please to keep the quiet.

Giles. I've not said a word. No one here can testify I've said a word. Is she going to fly again? I hear she flies.

Putnam. Man, be quiet now!

[*Everything is quiet. REBECCA walks across the room to the bed. Gentleness exudes from her. BETTY is quietly whimpering, eyes shut. REBECCA simply stands over the child, who gradually quiets.*]

[*And while they are so absorbed, we may put a word in for REBECCA. REBECCA was the wife of FRANCIS NURSE, who, from all accounts, was one of those men for whom both sides of the argument had to have respect. He was called upon to arbitrate disputes as though he were an unofficial judge, and REBECCA also enjoyed the high opinion most people had for him. By the time of the delusion, they had three hundred acres, and their children were settled in separate homesteads within the same estate. However, FRANCIS had origi-*

nally rented the land, and one theory has it that, as he gradually paid for it and raised his social status, there were those who resented his rise.

Another suggestion to explain the systematic campaign against REBECCA, and inferentially against FRANCIS, is the land war he fought with his neighbors, one of whom was a Putnam. This squabble grew to the proportions of a battle in the woods between partisans of both sides, and it is said to have lasted for two days. As for REBECCA herself, the general opinion of her character was so high that to explain how anyone dared cry her out for a witch—and more, how adults could bring themselves to lay hands on her—we must look to the fields and boundaries of that time.

As we have seen, THOMAS PUTNAM's man for the Salem ministry was Bayley. The Nurse clan had been in the faction that prevented Bayley's taking office. In addition, certain families allied to the Nurses by blood or friendship, and whose farms were contiguous with the Nurse farm or close to it, combined to break away from the Salem town authority and set up Topsfield, a new and independent entity whose existence was resented by old Salemites.

That the guiding hand behind the outcry was PUTNAM's is indicated by the fact that, as soon as it began, this Topsfield-Nurse faction absented themselves from church in protest and disbelief. It was Edward and Jonathan Putnam who signed the first complaint against REBECCA; and THOMAS PUTNAM's little daughter was the one who fell into a fit at the hearing and pointed to REBECCA as her attacker. To top it all, MRS. PUTNAM—who is now staring at the bewitched child on the bed—soon accused REBECCA's spirit of "tempting her to iniquity," a charge that had more truth in it than MRS. PUTNAM could know.]

Mrs. Putnam. [Astonished.] What have you done?

[REBECCA, in thought, now leaves the bedside and sits.]

Parris. [Wondrous and relieved.] What do you make of it, Rebecca?

Putnam. [Eagerly.] Goody Nurse, will you go to my Ruth and see if you can wake her?

Rebecca. [Sitting.] I think she'll wake in time. Pray calm yourselves. I have eleven children, and I am twenty-six times a grandma, and I have seen them all through

their silly seasons, and when it come on them they will run the Devil bowlegged keeping up with their mischief. I think she'll wake when she tires of it. A child's spirit is like a child, you can never catch it by running after it; you must stand still, and, for love, it will soon itself come back.

Proctor. Aye, that's the truth of it, Rebecca.

Mrs. Putnam. This is no silly season, Rebecca. My Ruth is bewildered, Rebecca; she cannot eat.

Rebecca. Perhaps she is not hungered yet. [To PARRIS.] I hope you are not decided to go in search of loose spirits, Mr. Parris. I've heard promise of that outside.

Parris. A wide opinion's running in the parish that the Devil may be among us, and I would satisfy them that they are wrong.

Proctor. Then let you come out and call them wrong. Did you consult the wardens before you called this minister to look for devils?

Parris. He is not coming to look for devils!

Proctor. Then what's he coming for?

Putnam. There be children dyin' in the village, Mister!

Proctor. I seen none dyin'. This society will not be a bag to swing around your head, Mr. Putnam. [To PARRIS.] Did you call a meeting before you—?

Putnam. I am sick of meetings; cannot the man turn his head without he have a meeting?

Proctor. He may turn his head, but not to Hell!

Rebecca. Pray, John, be calm. [Pause. He defers to her.] Mr. Parris, I think you'd best send Reverend Hale back as soon as he come. This will set us all to arguin' again in the society, and we thought to have peace this year. I think we ought rely on the doctor now, and good prayer.

Mrs. Putnam. Rebecca, the doctor's baffled!

Rebecca. If so he is, then let us go to God for the cause of it. There is prodigious danger in the seeking of loose spirits. I fear it, I fear it. Let us rather blame ourselves and—

Putnam. How may we blame ourselves? I am one of nine sons; the Putnam seed have peopled this province. And yet I have but one child left of eight—and now she shrivels!

Rebecca. I cannot fathom that.

Mrs. Putnam. [With a growing edge of sarcasm.] But I must! You think it God's work you should never lose a child, nor

grandchild either, and I bury all but one? There are wheels within wheels in this village, and fires within fires!

Putnam. [To PARRIS.] When Reverend Hale comes, you will proceed to look for signs of witchcraft here.

Proctor. [To PUTNAM.] You cannot command Mr. Parris. We vote by name in this society, not by acreage.

Putnam. I never heard you worried so on this society, Mr. Proctor. I do not think I saw you at Sabbath meeting since snow flew.

Proctor. I have trouble enough without I come five mile to hear him preach only hell-fire and bloody damnation. Take it to heart, Mr. Parris. There are many others who stay away from church these days because you hardly ever mention God any more.

Parris. [Now aroused.] Why, that's a drastic charge!

Rebecca. It's somewhat true; there are many that quail to bring their children—

Parris. I do not preach for children, Rebecca. It is not the children who are unmindful of their obligations toward this ministry.

Rebecca. Are there really those unmindful?

Parris. I should say the better half of Salem village—

Putnam. And more than that!

Parris. Where is my wood? My contract provides I be supplied with all my firewood. I am waiting since November for a stick, and even in November I had to show my frostbitten hands like some London beggar!

Giles. You are allowed six pound a year to buy your wood, Mr. Parris.

Parris. I regard that six pound as part of my salary. I am paid little enough without I spend six pound on firewood.

Proctor. Sixty, plus six for firewood—

Parris. The salary is sixty-six pound, Mr. Proctor! I am not some preaching farmer with a book under my arm; I am a graduate of Harvard College.

Giles. Aye, and well instructed in arithmetic!

Parris. Mr. Corey, you will look far for a man of my kind at sixty pound a year! I am not used to this poverty; I left a thrifty business in the Barbados to serve the Lord. I do not fathom it, why am I persecuted here? I cannot offer one proposition but there be a howling riot of argument. I have often wondered if the Devil be in it somewhere; I cannot understand you people otherwise.

Proctor. Mr. Parris, you are the first

minister ever did demand the deed to this house—

Parris. Man! Don't a minister deserve a house to live in?

Proctor. To live in, yes. But to ask ownership is like you shall own the meeting house itself; the last meeting I were at you spoke so long on deeds and mortgages I thought it were an auction.

Parris. I want a mark of confidence, is all! I am your third preacher in seven years. I do not wish to be put out like the cat whenever some majority feels the whim. You people seem not to comprehend that a minister is the Lord's man in the parish; a minister is not to be so lightly crossed and contradicted—

Putnam. Aye!

Parris. There is either obedience or the church will burn like Hell is burning!

Proctor. Can you speak one minute without we land in Hell again? I am sick of Hell!

Parris. It is not for you to say what is good for you to hear!

Proctor. I may speak my heart, I think!

Parris. [In a fury.] What, are we Quakers? We are not Quakers here yet, Mr. Proctor. And you may tell that to your followers!

Proctor. My followers!

Parris. [Now he's out with it.] There is a party in this church. I am not blind; there is a faction and a party.

Proctor. Against you?

Putnam. Against him and all authority!

Proctor. Why, then I must find it and join it. [There is shock among the others.]

Rebecca. He does not mean that.

Putnam. He confessed it now!

Proctor. I mean it solemnly, Rebecca; I like not the smell of this "authority."

Rebecca. No, you cannot break charity with your minister. You are another kind, John. Clasp his hand, make your peace.

Proctor. I have a crop to sow and lumber to drag home. [He goes angrily to the door and turns to COREY with a smile.] What say you, Giles, let's find the party. He says there's a party.

Giles. I've changed my opinion of this man, John. Mr. Parris, I beg your pardon. I never thought you had so much iron in you.

Parris. [Surprised.] Why, thank you, Giles!

Giles. It suggests to the mind what the trouble be among us all these years. [To all.] Think on it. Wherefore is everybody suing everybody else? Think on it now, it's

a deep thing, and dark as a pit. I have been six time in court this year—

Proctor. [*Familiarly, with warmth, although he knows he is approaching the edge of GILES' tolerance with this.*] Is it the Devil's fault that a man cannot say you good morning without you clap him for defamation? You're old, Giles, and you're not hearin' so well as you did.

Giles. [*He cannot be crossed.*] John Proctor, I have only last month collected four pound damages for you publicly sayin' I burned the roof off your house, and I—

Proctor. [*Laughing.*] I never said no such thing, but I've paid you for it, so I hope I can call you deaf without charge. Now come along, Giles, and help me drag my lumber home.

Putnam. A moment, Mr. Proctor. What lumber is that you're draggin', if I may ask you?

Proctor. My lumber. From out my forest by the riverside.

Putnam. Why, we are surely gone wild this year. What anarchy is this? That tract is in my bounds, it's in my bounds, Mr. Proctor.

Proctor. In your bounds! [*Indicating REBECCA.*] I bought that tract from Goody Nurse's husband five months ago.

Putnam. He had no right to sell it. It stands clear in my grandfather's will that all the land between the river and—

Proctor. Your grandfather had a habit of willing land that never belonged to him, if I may say it plain.

Giles. That's God's truth; he nearly willed away my north pasture but he knew I'd break his fingers before he'd set his name to it. Let's get your lumber home, John. I feel a sudden will to work coming on.

Putnam. You load one oak of mine and you'll fight to drag it home!

Giles. Aye, and we'll win too, Putnam—this fool and I. Come on! [*He turns to PROCTOR and starts out.*]

Putnam. I'll have my men on you, Corey! I'll clap a writ on you!

[*Enter REVEREND JOHN HALE of Beverly.*]

[*MR. HALE is nearing forty, a tight-skinned, eager-eyed intellectual. This is a beloved errand for him; on being called here to ascertain witchcraft he felt the pride of the specialist whose unique knowledge has at last been publicly called for. Like almost all men of learning, he spent a good deal of his time pondering the invisible world, especially since he had himself encoun-*

tered a witch in his parish not long before. That woman, however, turned into a mere pest under his searching scrutiny, and the child she had allegedly been afflicting recovered her normal behavior after HALE had given her his kindness and a few days of rest in his own house. However, that experience never raised a doubt in his mind as to the reality of the underworld or the existence of Lucifer's many-faced lieutenants. And his belief is not to his discredit. Better minds than HALE's were—and still are—convinced that there is a society of spirits beyond our ken. One cannot help noting that one of his lines has never yet raised a laugh in any audience that has seen this play; it is his assurance that "We cannot look to superstition in this. The Devil is precise." Evidently we are not quite certain even now whether diabolism is holy and not to be scoffed at. And it is no accident that we should be so bemused.

Like REVEREND HALE and the others on this stage, we conceive the Devil as a necessary part of a respectable view of cosmology. Ours is a divided empire in which certain ideas and emotions and actions are of God, and their opposites are of Lucifer. It is as impossible for most men to conceive of a morality without sin as of an earth without "sky." Since 1692 a great but superficial change has wiped out God's beard and the Devil's horns, but the world is still gripped between two diametrically opposed absolutes. The concept of unity, in which positive and negative are attributes of the same force, in which good and evil are relative, ever-changing, and always joined to the same phenomenon—such a concept is still reserved to the physical sciences and to the few who have grasped the history of ideas. When it is recalled that until the Christian era the underworld was never regarded as a hostile area, that all gods were useful and essentially friendly to man despite occasional lapses; when we see the steady and methodical incultation into humanity of the idea of man's worthlessness—until redeemed—the necessity of the Devil may become evident as a weapon, a weapon designed and used time and time again in every age to whip men into a surrender to a particular church or church-state. Our difficulty in believing the—for want of a better word—political inspiration

of the Devil is due in great part to the fact that he is called up and damned not only by our social antagonists but by our own side, whatever it may be. The Catholic Church, through its Inquisition, is famous for cultivating Lucifer as the arch-fiend, but the Church's enemies relied no less upon the Old Boy to keep the human mind enthralled. Luther was himself accused of alliance with Hell, and he in turn accused his enemies. To complicate matters further, he believed that he had had contact with the Devil and had argued theology with him. I am not surprised at this, for at my own university a professor of history—a Lutheran, by the way—used to assemble his graduate students, draw the shades, and commune in the classroom with Erasmus. He was never, to my knowledge, officially scoffed at for this, the reason being that the university officials, like most of us, are the children of a history which still sucks at the Devil's teats. At this writing, only England has held back before the temptations of contemporary diabolism. In the countries of the Communist ideology, all resistance of any import is linked to the totally malign capitalist succubi, and in America any man who is not reactionary in his views is open to the charge of alliance with the Red hell. Political opposition, thereby, is given an inhumane overlay which then justifies the abrogation of all normally applied customs of civilized intercourse. A political policy is equated with moral right, and opposition to it with diabolical malevolence. Once such an equation is effectively made, society becomes a congerie of plots and counterplots, and the main role of government changes from that of the arbiter to that of the scourge of God.

The results of this process are no different now from what they ever were, except sometimes in the degree of cruelty inflicted, and not always even in that department. Normally the actions and deeds of a man were all that society felt comfortable in judging. The secret intent of an action was left to the ministers, priests, and rabbis to deal with. When diabolism rises, however, actions are the least important manifests of the true nature of a man. The Devil, as REVEREND HALE said, is a wily

one, and, until an hour before he fell, even God thought him beautiful in Heaven.

The analogy, however, seems to falter when one considers that, while there were no witches then, there are Communists and capitalists now, and in each camp there is certain proof that spies of each side are at work undermining the other. But this is a snobbish objection and not at all warranted by the facts. I have no doubt that people were communing with, and even worshiping, the Devil in Salem, and if the whole truth could be known in this case, as it is in others, we should discover a regular and conventionalized propitiation of the dark spirit. One certain evidence of this is the confession of TITUBA, the slave of REVEREND PARRIS, and another is the behavior of the children who were known to have indulged in sorceries with her.

There are accounts of similar klatches in Europe, where the daughters of the towns would assemble at night and, sometimes with fetishes, sometimes with a selected young man, give themselves to love, with some bastardly results. The Church, sharp-eyed as it must be when gods long dead are brought to life, condemned these orgies as witchcraft and interpreted them, rightly, as a resurgence of the Dionysiac forces it had crushed long before. Sex, sin, and the Devil were early linked, and so they continued to be in Salem, and are today. From all accounts there are no more puritanical mores in the world than those enforced by the Communists in Russia, where women's fashions, for instance, are as prudent and all-covering as any American Baptist would desire. The divorce laws lay a tremendous responsibility on the father for the care of his children. Even the laxity of divorce regulations in the early years of the revolution was undoubtedly a revulsion from the nineteenth-century Victorian immobility of marriage and the consequent hypocrisy that developed from it. If for no other reasons, a state so powerful, so jealous of the uniformity of its citizens, cannot long tolerate the atomization of the family. And yet, in American eyes at least, there remains the conviction that the Russian attitude toward women is lascivious. It is the Devil working again, just as he is work-

ing within the Slav who is shocked at the very idea of a woman's disrobing herself in a burlesque show. Our opposites are always robed in sexual sin, and it is from this unconscious conviction that demonology gains both its attractive sensuality and its capacity to infuriate and frighten.

Coming into Salem now, REVEREND HALE conceives of himself much as a young doctor on his first call. His painfully acquired armory of symptoms, catchwords, and diagnostic procedures are now to be put to use at last. The road from Beverly is unusually busy this morning, and he has passed a hundred rumors that make him smile at the ignorance of the yeomanry in this most precise science. He feels himself allied with the best minds of Europe—kings, philosophers, scientists, and ecclesiasts of all churches. His goal is light, goodness and its preservation, and he knows the exaltation of the blessed whose intelligence, sharpened by minute examinations of enormous tracts, is finally called upon to face what may be a bloody fight with the Fiend himself.]

[He appears loaded down with half a dozen heavy books.]

Hale. Pray you, someone take these!

Parris. [Delighted.] Mr. Hale! Oh! it's good to see you again! [Taking some books.] My, they're heavy!

Hale. [Setting down his books.] They must be; they are weighted with authority.

Parris. [A little scared.] Well, you do come prepared!

Hale. We shall need hard study if it comes to tracking down the Old Boy. [Noticing REBECCA.] You cannot be Rebecca Nurse?

Rebecca. I am, sir. Do you know me?

Hale. It's strange how I knew you, but I suppose you look as such a good soul should. We have all heard of your great charities in Beverly.

Parris. Do you know this gentleman? Mr. Thomas Putnam. And his good wife Ann.

Hale. Putnam! I had not expected such distinguished company, sir.

Putnam. [Pleased.] It does not seem to help us today, Mr. Hale. We look to you to come to our house and save our child.

Hale. Your child ails too?

Mrs. Putnam. Her soul, her soul seems flown away. She sleeps and yet she walks . . .

Putnam. She cannot eat.

Hale. Cannot eat! [Thinks on it. Then, to PROCTOR and GILES COREY.] Do you men have afflicted children?

Parris. No, no, these are farmers. John Proctor—

Giles Corey. He don't believe in witches.

Proctor. [To HALE.] I never spoke on witches one way or the other. Will you come, Giles?

Giles. No—no, John, I think not. I have some few queer questions of my own to ask this fellow.

Proctor. I've heard you to be a sensible man, Mr. Hale. I hope you'll leave some of it in Salem.

[PROCTOR goes. HALE stands embarrassed for an instant.]

Parris. [Quickly.] Will you look at my daughter, sir? [Leads HALE to the bed.] She has tried to leap out the window; we discovered her this morning on the high-road, waving her arms as though she'd fly.

Hale. [Narrowing his eyes.] Tries to fly.

Putnam. She cannot bear to hear the Lord's name, Mr. Hale; that's a sure sign of witchcraft afloat.

Hale. [Holding up his hands.] No, no. Now let me instruct you. We cannot look to superstition in this. The Devil is precise; the marks of his presence are definite as stone, and I must tell you all that I shall not proceed unless you are prepared to believe me if I should find no bruise of hell upon her.

Parris. It is agreed, sir—it is agreed—we will abide by your judgment.

Hale. Good then. [He goes to the bed, looks down at BETTY. To PARRIS.] Now, sir, what were your first warning of this strangeness?

Parris. Why, sir—I discovered her [Indicating ABIGAIL.] and my niece and ten or twelve of the other girls, dancing in the forest last night.

Hale. [Surprised.] You permit dancing?

Parris. No, no, it were secret—

Mrs. Putnam. [Unable to wait.] Mr. Parris's slave has knowledge of conjurin', sir.

Parris. [To MRS. PUTNAM.] We cannot be sure of that, Goody Ann—

Mrs. Putnam. [Frightened, very softly.] I know it, sir. I sent my child—she should learn from Tituba who murdered her sisters.

Rebecca. [Horried.] Goody Ann! You sent a child to conjure up the dead?

Mrs. Putnam. Let God blame me, not you, not you, Rebecca! I'll not have you

judging me any more! [*To HALE.*] Is it a natural work to lose seven children before they live a day?

Parris. Sssh!

[REBECCA, with great pain, turns her face away. There is a pause.]

Hale. Seven dead in childbirth.

Mrs. Putnam. [*Softly.*] Aye.

[*Her voice breaks; she looks up at him.*

Silence. HALE is impressed. PARRIS looks to him. He goes to his books, opens one, turn pages, then reads. All wait, avidly.]

Parris. [*Hushed.*] What book is that?

Mrs. Putnam. What's there, sir?

Hale. [*With a tasty love of intellectual pursuit.*] Here is all the invisible world, caught, defined, and calculated. In these books the Devil stands stripped of all his brute disguises. Here are all your familiar spirits—your incubi and succubi; your witches that go by land, by air, and by sea; your wizards of the night and of the day. Have no fear now—we shall find him out if he has come among us, and I mean to crush him utterly if he has shown his face!

[*He starts for the bed.*]

Rebecca. Will it hurt the child, sir?

Hale. I cannot tell. If she is truly in the Devil's grip we may have to rip and tear to get her free.

Rebecca. I think I'll go, then. I am too old for this. [*She rises.*]

Parris. [*Striving for conviction.*] Why, Rebecca, we may open up the boil of all our troubles today!

Rebecca. Let us hope for that. I go to God for you, sir.

Parris. [*With trepidation—and resentment.*] I hope you do not mean we go to Satan here! [*Slight pause.*]

Rebecca. I wish I knew.

[*She goes out; they feel resentful of her note of moral superiority.*]

Putnam. [*Abruptly.*] Come, Mr. Hale, let's get on. Sit you here.

Giles. Mr. Hale, I have always wanted to ask a learned man—what signifies the readin' of strange books?

Hale. What books?

Giles. I cannot tell; she hides them.

Hale. Who does this?

Giles. Martha, my wife. I have waked at night many a time and found her in a corner, readin' of a book. Now what do you make of that?

Hale. Why, that's not necessarily—

Giles. It discomfits me! Last night—mark this—I tried and tried and could not say my prayers. And then she close her

book and walks out of the house, and suddenly—mark this—I could pray again!

[*OLD GILES must be spoken for, if only because his fate was to be so remarkable and so different from that of all the others. He was in his early eighties at this time, and was the most comical hero in the history. No man has ever been blamed for so much. If a cow was missed, the first thought was to look for her around COREY'S house; a fire blazing up at night brought suspicion of arson to his door. He didn't give a hoot for public opinion, and only in his last years—after he had married MARTHA—did he bother much with the church. That she stopped his prayer is very probable, but he forgot to say that he'd only recently learned any prayers and it didn't take much to make him stumble over them. He was a crank and a nuisance, but withal a deeply innocent and brave man. In court, once, he was asked if it were true that he had been frightened by the strange behavior of a hog and had then said he knew it to be the Devil in an animal's shape. "What frightened you?" he was asked. He forgot everything but the word "frighted," and instantly replied, "I do not know that I ever spoke that word in my life."*]

Hale. Ah. The stoppage of prayer—that is strange. I'll speak further on that with you.

Giles. I'm not sayin' she's touched the Devil, now, but I'd admire to know what books she reads and why she hides them. She'll not answer me, y' see.

Hale. Aye, we'll discuss it. [*To all.*] Now mark me, if the Devil is in her you will witness some frightful wonders in this room, so please to keep your wits about you. Mr. Putnam, stand close in case she flies. Now, Betty, dear, will you sit up? [*PUTNAM comes in closer, ready-handed. HALE sits BETTY up, but she hangs limp in his hands.*] Hmm. [*He observes her carefully. The others watch breathlessly.*] Can you hear me? I am John Hale, minister of Beverly. I have come to help you, dear. Do you remember my two little girls in Beverly?

[*She does not stir in his hands.*]

Parris. [*In fright.*] How can it be the Devil? Why would he choose my house to strike? We have all manner of licentious people in the village!

Hale. What victory would the Devil have to win a soul already bad? It is the best the

Devil wants, and who is better than the minister?

Giles. That's deep, Mr. Parris, deep, deep!

Parris. [*With resolution now.*] Betty! Answer Mr. Hale! Betty!

Hale. Does someone afflict you, child? It need not be a woman, mind you, or a man. Perhaps some bird invisible to others comes to you—perhaps a pig, a mouse, or any beast at all. Is there some figure bids you fly? [*THE CHILD remains limp in his hands. In silence he lays her back on the pillow. Now, holding out his hands toward her, he intones.*] In nomine Domini Sabaoth sui filique ite ad infernos. [*She does not stir. He turns to ABIGAIL, his eyes narrowing.*] Abigail, what sort of dancing were you doing with her in the forest?

Abigail. Why—common dancing is all.

Parris. I think I ought to say that I—I saw a kettle in the grass where they were dancing.

Abigail. That were only soup.

Hale. What sort of soup were in this kettle, Abigail?

Abigail. Why, it were beans—and lentils, I think, and—

Hale. Mr. Parris, you did not notice, did you, any living thing in the kettle? A mouse, perhaps, a spider, a frog—?

Parris. [*Fearfully.*] I—do believe there were some movement—in the soup.

Abigail. That jumped in, we never put it in!

Hale. [*Quickly.*] What jumped in?

Abigail. Why, a very little frog jumped—

Parris. A frog, Abby!

Hale. [*Grasping ABIGAIL.*] Abigail, it may be your cousin is dying. Did you call the Devil last night?

Abigail. I never called him! Tituba, Tituba . . .

Parris. [*Blanched.*] She called the Devil?

Hale. I should like to speak with Tituba.

Parris. Goody Ann, will you bring her up?

[*MRS. PUTNAM exits.*]

Hale. How did she call him?

Abigail. I know not—she spoke Barbados.

Hale. Did you feel any strangeness when she called him? A sudden cold wind, perhaps? A trembling below the ground?

Abigail. I didn't see no Devil! [*Shaking BETTY.*] Betty, wake up. Betty! Betty!

Hale. You cannot evade me, Abigail. Did your cousin drink any of the brew in that kettle?

Abigail. She never drank it!

Hale. Did you drink it?

Abigail. No, sir!

Hale. Did Tituba ask you to drink it?

Abigail. She tried, but I refused.

Hale. Why are you concealing? Have you sold yourself to Lucifer?

Abigail. I never sold myself! I'm a good girl! I'm a proper girl!

[*MRS. PUTNAM enters with TITUBA, and instantly ABIGAIL points at TITUBA.*]

Abigail. She made me do it! She made Betty do it!

Tituba. [*Shocked and angry.*] Abby!

Abigail. She makes me drink blood!

Parris. Blood!!

Mrs. Putnam. My baby's blood?

Tituba. No, no, chicken blood. I give she chicken blood!

Hale. Woman, have you enlisted these children for the Devil?

Tituba. No, no, sir, I don't truck with no Devil!

Hale. Why can she not wake? Are you silencing this child?

Tituba. I love me Betty!

Hale. You have sent your spirit out upon this child, have you not? Are you gathering souls for the Devil?

Abigail. She sends her spirit on me in church; she makes me laugh at prayer!

Parris. She have often laughed at prayer!

Abigail. She comes to me every night to go and drink blood!

Tituba. You beg me to conjure! She beg me make charm—

Abigail. Don't lie! [*To HALE.*] She comes to me while I sleep; she's always making me dream corruptions!

Tituba. Why you say that, Abby?

Abigail. Sometimes I wake and find myself standing in the open doorway and not a stitch on my body! I always hear her laughing in my sleep. I hear her singing her Barbados songs and tempting me with—

Tituba. Mister Reverend, I never—

Hale. [*Resolved now.*] Tituba, I want you to wake this child.

Tituba. I have no power on this child, sir.

Hale. You most certainly do, and you will free her from it now! When did you compact with the Devil?

Tituba. I don't compact with no Devil!

Parris. You will confess yourself or I will take you out and whip you to your death, Tituba!

Putnam. This woman must be hanged! She must be taken and hanged!

Tituba. [*Terrified, falls to her knees.*] No, no, don't hang Tituba! I tell him I don't desire to work for him, sir.

Parris. The Devil?

Hale. Then you saw him! [*TITUBA weeps.*] Now Tituba, I know that when we bind ourselves to Hell it is very hard to break with it. We are going to help you tear yourself free—

Tituba. [*Frightened by the coming process.*] Mister Reverend, I do believe somebody else be witchin' these children.

Hale. Who?

Tituba. I don't know, sir, but the Devil got him numerous witches.

Hale. Does he! [*It is a clue.*] Tituba, look into my eyes. Come, look into me. [*She raises her eyes to his fearfully.*] You would be a good Christian woman, would you not, Tituba?

Tituba. Aye, sir, a good Christian woman.

Hale. And you love these little children?

Tituba. Oh, yes, sir, I don't desire to hurt little children.

Hale. And you love God, Tituba?

Tituba. I love God with all my bein'.

Hale. Now, in God's holy name—

Tituba. Bless Him. Bless Him.

[*She is rocking on her knees, sobbing in terror.*]

Hale. And to His glory—

Tituba. Eternal glory. Bless Him—bless God . . .

Hale. Open yourself, Tituba—open yourself and let God's holy light shine on you.

Tituba. Oh, bless the Lord.

Hale. When the Devil comes to you does he ever come—with another person? [*She stares up into his face.*] Perhaps another person in the village? Someone you know.

Parris. Who come with him?

Putnam. Sarah Good? Did you ever see Sarah Good with him? Or Osburn?

Parris. Was it man or woman came with him?

Tituba. Man or woman. Was—was woman.

Parris. What woman? A woman, you said. What woman?

Tituba. It was black dark, and I—

Parris. You could see him, why could you not see her?

Tituba. Well, they was always talking; they was always runnin' round and carryin' on—

Parris. You mean out of Salem? Salem witches?

Tituba. I believe so, yes, sir.

[*Now HALE takes her hand. She is surprised.*]

Hale. Tituba. You must have no fear to tell us who they are, do you understand? We will protect you. The Devil can never

overcome a minister. You know that, do you not?

Tituba. [*Kisses HALE's hand.*] Aye, sir, oh, I do.

Hale. You have confessed yourself to witchcraft, and that speaks a wish to come to Heaven's side. And we will bless you, Tituba.

Tituba. [*Deeply relieved.*] Oh, God bless you, Mr. Hale!

Hale. [*With rising exaltation.*] You are God's instrument put in our hands to discover the Devil's agents among us. You are selected, Tituba, you are chosen to help us cleanse our village. So speak utterly, Tituba; turn your back on him and face God—face God, Tituba, and God will protect you.

Tituba. [*Joining with him.*] Oh, God, protect Tituba!

Hale. [*Kindly.*] Who came to you with the Devil? Two? Three? Four? How many?

[*TITUBA pants, and begins rocking back and forth again, staring ahead.*]

Tituba. There was four. There was four.

Parris. [*Pressing in on her.*] Who? Who? Their names, their names!

Tituba. [*Suddenly bursting out.*] Oh, how many times he bid me kill you, Mr. Parris!

Parris. Kill me!

Tituba. [*In a fury.*] He say Mr. Parris must be kill! Mr. Parris no goodly man, Mr. Parris mean man and no gentle man, and he bid me rise out of my bed and cut your throat! [*They gasp.*] But I tell him "No! I don't hate that man. I don't want kill that man." But he say, "You work for me, Tituba, and I make you free! I give you pretty dress to wear, and put you way high up in the air, and you gone fly back to Barbados!" And I say, "You lie, Devil, you lie!" And then he come one stormy night to me, and he say, "Look! I have white people belong to me." And I look—and there was Goody Good.

Parris. Sarah Good!

Tituba. [*Rocking and weeping.*] Aye, sir, and Goody Osburn.

Mrs. Putnam. I knew it! Goody Osburn were midwife to me three times. I begged you, Thomas, did I not? I begged him not to call Osburn because I feared her. My babies always shriveled in her hands!

Hale. Take courage, you must give us all their names. How can you bear to see this child suffering? Look at her, Tituba. [*He is indicating BETTY on the bed.*] Look at her God-given innocence; her soul is so tender; we must protect her, Tituba; the Devil is

out and preying on her like a beast upon the flesh of the pure lamb. God will bless you for your help.

Abigail. [Rises, staring as though inspired, and cries out.] I want to open myself! [They turn to her, startled. She is enraptured, as though in a pearly light.] I want the light of God, I want the sweet love of Jesus! I danced for the Devil; I saw him; I wrote in his book; I go back to Jesus; I kiss His hand. I saw Sarah Good with the Devil! I saw Goody Osburn with the Devil! I saw Bridget Bishop with the Devil!

[As she is speaking, BETTY is rising from the bed, a fever in her eyes, and picks up the chant.]

Betty. [Staring too.] I saw George Jacobs with the Devil! I saw Goody Howe with the Devil!

Parris. She speaks! [He rushes to embrace BETTY.] She speaks!

Hale. Glory to God! It is broken, they are free!

Betty. [Calling out hysterically and with great relief.] I saw Martha Bellows with the Devil!

Abigail. I saw Goody Sibber with the Devil! [It is rising to a great glee.]

Putnam. The marshal, I'll call the marshal!

[PARRIS is shouting a prayer of thanksgiving.]

Betty. I saw Alice Barrow with the Devil!

[The curtain begins to fall.]

Hale. [As PUTNAM goes out.] Let the marshal bring irons!

Abigail. I saw Goody Hawkins with the Devil!

Betty. I saw Goody Bibber with the Devil!

Abigail. I saw Goody Booth with the Devil!

[On their ecstatic cries THE CURTAIN FALLS]

ACT TWO

The common room of PROCTOR's house, eight days later. At the right is a door opening on the fields outside. A fireplace is at the left, and behind it a stairway leading upstairs. It is the low, dark, and rather long living room of the time.

[As the curtain rises, the room is empty. From above, ELIZABETH is heard softly singing to the children. Presently the door opens and JOHN PROCTOR enters, carrying his gun. He glances about the room as he comes toward the fireplace, then halts for an instant as he hears her singing. He continues on to the fireplace, leans the gun against the wall as he swings a pot out of the fire and smells it. Then he lifts out the ladle and tastes. He is not quite pleased. He reaches to a cupboard, takes a pinch of salt, and drops it into the pot. As he is tasting again, her footsteps are heard on the stair. He swings the pot into the fireplace and goes to a basin and washes his hands and face. ELIZABETH enters.]

Elizabeth. What keeps you so late? It's almost dark.

Proctor. I were planting far out to the forest edge.

Elizabeth. Oh, you're done then.

Proctor. Aye, the farm is seeded. The boys asleep?

Elizabeth. They will be soon.

[And she goes to the fireplace, proceeds to ladle up stew in a dish.]

Proctor. Pray now for a fair summer.

Elizabeth. Aye.

Proctor. Are you well today?

Elizabeth. I am. [She brings the plate to the table, and, indicating the food.] It is a rabbit.

Proctor. [Going to the table.] Oh, is it! In Jonathan's trap?

Elizabeth. No, she walked into the house this afternoon; I found her sittin' in the corner like she come to visit.

Proctor. Oh, that's a good sign walkin' in.

Elizabeth. Pray God. It hurt my heart to strip her, poor rabbit.

[She sits and watches him taste it.]

Proctor. It's well seasoned.

Elizabeth. [Blushing with pleasure.] I took great care. She's tender?

Proctor. Aye. [He eats. She watches him.] I think we'll see green fields soon.

It's warm as blood beneath the clods.

Elizabeth. That's well.

Proctor. [*Eats, then looks up.*] If the crop is good I'll buy George Jacob's heifer. How would that please you?

Elizabeth. Aye, it would.

Proctor. [*With a grin.*] I mean to please you, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth. [*It is hard to say.*] I know it, John.

[*He gets up, goes to her, kisses her. She receives it. With a certain disappointment, he returns to the table.*]

Proctor. [*As gently as he can.*] Cider?

Elizabeth. [*With a sense of reprimanding herself for having forgot.*] Aye!

[*She gets up and goes and pours a glass for him. He now arches his back.*]

Proctor. This farm's a continent when you go foot by foot droppin' seeds in it.

Elizabeth. [*Coming with the cider.*] It must be.

Proctor. [*Drinks a long draught, then, putting the glass down.*] You ought to bring some flowers in the house.

Elizabeth. Oh! I forgot! I will tomorrow.

Proctor. It's winter in here yet. On Sunday let you come with me, and we'll walk the farm together; I never see such a load of flowers on the earth. [*With good feeling he goes and looks up at the sky through the open doorway.*] Lilacs have a purple smell. Lilac is the smell of nightfall, I think. Massachusetts is a beauty in the spring!

Elizabeth. Aye, it is.

[*There is a pause. She is watching him from the table as he stands there absorbing the night. It is as though she would speak but cannot. Instead, now, she takes up his plate and glass and fork and goes with them to the basin. Her back is turned to him. He turns to her and watches her. A sense of their separation rises.*]

Proctor. I think you're sad again. Are you?

Elizabeth. [*She doesn't want friction, and yet she must.*] You come so late I thought you'd gone to Salem this afternoon.

Proctor. Why? I have no business in Salem.

Elizabeth. You did speak of going, earlier this week.

Proctor. [*He knows what she means.*] I thought better of it since.

Elizabeth. Mary Warren's there today.

Proctor. Why'd you let her? You heard me forbid her to go to Salem any more!

Elizabeth. I couldn't stop her.

Proctor. [*Holding back a full condemnation of her.*] It is a fault, it is a fault, Elizabeth—you're the mistress here, not Mary Warren.

Elizabeth. She frightened all my strength away.

Proctor. How may that mouse frighten you, Elizabeth? You—

Elizabeth. It is a mouse no more. I forbid her go, and she raises up her chin like the daughter of a prince and says to me, "I must go to Salem, Goody Proctor; I am an official of the court!"

Proctor. Court! What court?

Elizabeth. Aye, it is a proper court they have now. They've sent four judges out of Boston, she says, weighty magistrates of the General Court, and at the head sits the Deputy Governor of the Province.

Proctor. [*Astonished.*] Why, she's mad.

Elizabeth. I would to God she were. There be fourteen people in the jail now, she says. [*PROCTOR simply looks at her, unable to grasp it.*] And they'll be tried, and the court have power to hang them too, she says.

Proctor. [*Scoffing, but without conviction.*] Ah, they'd never hang—

Elizabeth. The Deputy Governor promise hangin' if they'll not confess, John. The town's gone wild, I think. She speak of Abigail, and I thought she were a saint, to hear her. Abigail brings the other girls into the court, and where she walks the crowd will part like the sea for Israel. And folks are brought before them, and if they scream and howl and fall to the floor—the person's clapped in the jail for bewitchin' them.

Proctor. [*Wide-eyed.*] Oh, it is a black mischief.

Elizabeth. I think you must go to Salem, John. [*He turns to her.*] I think so. You must tell them it is a fraud.

Proctor. [*Thinking beyond this.*] Aye, it is, it is surely.

Elizabeth. Let you go to Ezekiel Cheever—he knows you well. And tell him what she said to you last week in her uncle's house. She said it had naught to do with witchcraft, did she not?

Proctor. [*In thought.*] Aye, she did, she did. [*Now, a pause.*]

Elizabeth. [*Quietly, fearing to anger him by prodding.*] God forbid you keep that from the court, John. I think they must be told.

Proctor. [*Quietly, struggling with his thought.*] Aye, they must, they must. It is a wonder they do believe her.

Elizabeth. I would go to Salem now, John—let you go tonight.

Proctor. I'll think on it.

Elizabeth. [*With her courage now.*] You cannot keep it, John.

Proctor. [*Angering.*] I know I cannot keep it. I say I will think on it!

Elizabeth. [*Hurt, and very coldly.*] Good, then, let you think on it.

[*She stands and starts to walk out of the room.*]

Proctor. I am only wondering how I may prove what she told me, Elizabeth. If the girl's a saint now, I think it is not easy to prove she's fraud, and the town gone so silly. She told it to me in a room alone—I have no proof for it.

Elizabeth. You were alone with her?

Proctor. [*Stubbornly.*] For a moment alone, aye.

Elizabeth. Why, then, it is not as you told me.

Proctor. [*His anger rising.*] For a moment, I say. The others come in soon after.

Elizabeth. [*Quietly—she has suddenly lost all faith in him.*] Do as you wish, then.

[*She starts to turn.*]

Proctor. Woman. [*She turns to him.*] I'll not have your suspicion any more.

Elizabeth. [*A little loftily.*] I have no—

Proctor. I'll not have it!

Elizabeth. Then let you not earn it.

Proctor. [*With a violent undertone.*] You doubt me yet?

Elizabeth. [*With a smile, to keep her dignity.*] John, if it were not Abigail that you must go to hurt, would you falter now? I think not.

Proctor. Now look you—

Elizabeth. I see what I see, John.

Proctor. [*With solemn warning.*] You will not judge me more, Elizabeth. I have good reason to think before I charge fraud on Abigail, and I will think on it. Let you look to your own improvement before you go to judge your husband any more. I have forgot Abigail, and—

Elizabeth. And I.

Proctor. Spare me! You forget nothin' and forgive nothin'. Learn charity, woman. I have gone tiptoe in this house all seven months since she is gone. I have not moved from there to there without I think to please you, and still an everlasting funeral marches round your heart. I cannot speak but I am doubted, every moment judged for lies, as though I come into a court when I come into this house!

Elizabeth. John, you are not open with

me. You saw her with a crowd, you said. Now you—

Proctor. I'll plead my honesty no more, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth. [*Now she would justify herself.*] John, I am only—

Proctor. No more! I should have roared you down when first you told me your suspicion. But I wilted, and, like a Christian, I confessed. Confessed! Some dream I had must have mistaken you for God that day. But you're not, you're not, and let you remember it! Let you look sometimes for the goodness in me, and judge me not.

Elizabeth. I do not judge you. The magistrate sits in your heart that judges you. I never thought you but a good man, John — [*With a smile.*] —only somewhat bewildered.

Proctor. [*Laughing bitterly.*] Oh, Elizabeth, your justice would freeze beer! [*He turns suddenly toward a sound outside. He starts for the door as MARY WARREN enters. As soon as he sees her, he goes directly to her and grabs her by her cloak, furious.*] How do you go to Salem when I forbid it? Do you mock me? [*Shaking her.*] I'll whip you if you dare leave this house again!

[*Strangely, she doesn't resist him, but hangs limply by his grip.*]

Mary Warren. I am sick, I am sick, Mr. Proctor. Pray, pray, hurt me not. [*Her strangeness throws him off, and her evident pallor and weakness. He frees her.*] My insides are all shuddery; I am in the proceedings all day, sir.

Proctor. [*With draining anger—his curiosity is draining it.*] And what of these proceedings here? When will you proceed to keep this house, as you are paid nine pound a year to do—and my wife not wholly well?

[*As though to compensate, MARY WARREN goes to ELIZABETH with a small rag doll.*]

Mary Warren. I made a gift for you today, Goody Proctor. I had to sit long hours in a chair, and passed the time with sewing.

Elizabeth. [*Perplexed, looking at the doll.*] Why, thank you, it's a fair poppet.

Mary Warren. [*With a trembling, decayed voice.*] We must all love each other now, Goody Proctor.

Elizabeth. [*Amazed at her strangeness.*] Aye, indeed we must.

Mary Warren. [*Glancing at the room.*] I'll get up early in the morning and clean the house. I must sleep now.

[*She turns and starts off.*]

Proctor. Mary. [*She halts.*] Is it true? There be fourteen women arrested?

Mary Warren. No, sir. There be thirty-nine now—

[*She suddenly breaks off and sobs and sits down, exhausted.*]

Elizabeth. Why, she's weepin'! What ails you, child?

Mary Warren. Goody Osburn—will hang!

[*There is a shocked pause, while she sobs.*]

Proctor. Hang! [*He calls into her face.*]
Hang, y'say?

Mary Warren. [*Through her weeping.*]
Aye.

Proctor. The Deputy Governor will permit it?

Mary Warren. He sentenced her. He must. [*To ameliorate it.*] But not Sarah Good. For Sarah Good confessed, y'see.

Proctor. Confessed! To what?

Mary Warren. That she— [*In horror at the memory.*—she sometimes made a compact with Lucifer, and wrote her name in his black book—with her blood—and bound herself to torment Christians till God's thrown down—and we all must worship Hell forevermore. [*Pause.*]

Proctor. But—surely you know what a jabberer she is. Did you tell them that?

Mary Warren. Mr. Proctor, in open court she near to choked us all to death.

Proctor. How, choked you?

Mary Warren. She sent her spirit out.

Elizabeth. Oh, Mary, Mary, surely you—

Mary Warren. [*With an indignant edge.*] She tried to kill me many times, Goody Proctor!

Elizabeth. Why, I never heard you mention that before.

Mary Warren. I never knew it before. I never knew anything before. When she come into the court I say to myself, I must not accuse this woman, for she sleep in ditches, and so very old and poor. But then—then she sit there, denying and denying, and I feel a misty coldness climbin' up my back, and the skin on my skull begin to creep, and I feel a clamp around my neck and I cannot breathe air; and then [*Entranced.*] I hear a voice, a screamin' voice, and it were my voice—and all at once I remembered everything she done to me!

Proctor. Why? What did she do to you?

Mary Warren. [*Like one awakened to a marvelous secret insight.*] So many time, Mr. Proctor, she come to this very door, beggin' bread and a cup of cider—and mark this: whenever I turned her away empty, she mumbled.

Elizabeth. Mumbled! She may mumble if she's hungry.

Mary Warren. But *what* does she mumble? You must remember, Goody Proctor. Last month—a Monday, I think—she walked away, and I thought my guts would burst for two days after. Do you remember it?

Elizabeth. Why—I do, I think, but—

Mary Warren. And so I told that to Judge Hathorne, and he asks her so. "Goody Osburn," says he, "what curse do you mumble that this girl must fall sick after turning you away?" And then she replies [*Mimicking an old crone.*] "Why, your excellence, no curse at all. I only say my commandments; I hope I may say my commandments," says she!

Elizabeth. And that's an upright answer.

Mary Warren. Aye, but then Judge Hathorne say, "Recite for us your commandments!" [*Leaning avidly toward them.*] and of all the ten she could not say a single one. She never knew no commandments, and they had her in a flat lie!

Proctor. And so condemned her?

Mary Warren. [*Now a little strained, seeing his stubborn doubt.*] Why, they must when she condemned herself.

Proctor. But the proof, the proof!

Mary Warren. [*With greater impatience with him.*] I told you the proof. It's hard proof, hard as rock, the judges said.

Proctor. [*Pauses an instant, then.*] You will not go to court again, Mary Warren.

Mary Warren. I must tell you, sir, I will be gone every day now. I am amazed you do not see what weighty work we do.

Proctor. What work you do! It's strange work for a Christian girl to hang old women!

Mary Warren. But, Mr. Proctor, they will not hang them if they confess. Sarah Good will only sit in jail some time [*Recalling.*] and here's a wonder for you; think on this. Goody Good is pregnant.

Elizabeth. Pregnant! Are they mad? The woman's near to sixty!

Mary Warren. They had Doctor Griggs examine her, and she's full to the brim. And smokin' a pipe all these years, and no husband either! But she's safe, thank God, for they'll not hurt the innocent child. But be that not a marvel? You must see it, sir, it's God's work we do. So I'll be gone every day for some time. I'm—I am an official of the court, they say, and I—

[*She has been edging toward offstage.*]

Proctor. I'll official you!

[*He strides to the mantel, takes down the whip hanging there.*]

Mary Warren. [*Terrified, but coming*

erect, striving for her authority.] I'll not stand whipping any more!

Elizabeth. [*Hurriedly, as PROCTOR approaches.*] Mary, promise now you'll stay at home—

Mary Warren. [*Backing from him, but keeping her erect posture, striving, striving for her way.*] The Devil's loose in Salem, Mr. Proctor; we must discover where he's hiding!

Proctor. I'll whip the Devil out of you! [*With whip raised he reaches out for her, and she streaks away and yells.*]

Mary Warren. [*Pointing at ELIZABETH.*] I saved her life today!

[*Silence. His whip comes down.*]

Elizabeth. [*Softly.*] I am accused?

Mary Warren. [*Quaking.*] Somewhat mentioned. But I said I never see no sign you ever sent your spirit out to hurt no one, and seeing I do live so closely with you, they dismissed it.

Elizabeth. Who accused me?

Mary Warren. I am bound by law, I cannot tell it. [*To PROCTOR.*] I only hope you'll not be so sarcastical no more. Four judges and the King's deputy sat to dinner with us but an hour ago. I—I would have you speak civilly to me, from this out.

Proctor. [*In horror, muttering in disgust at her.*] Go to bed.

Mary Warren. [*With a stamp of her foot.*] I'll not be ordered to bed no more, Mr. Proctor! I am eighteen and a woman, however single!

Proctor. Do you wish to sit up? Then sit up.

Mary Warren. I wish to go to bed!

Proctor. [*In anger.*] Good night, then!

Mary Warren. Good night.

[*Dissatisfied, uncertain of herself, she goes out. Wide-eyed, both, PROCTOR and ELIZABETH stand staring.*]

Elizabeth. [*Quietly.*] Oh, the noose, the noose is up!

Proctor. There'll be no noose.

Elizabeth. She wants me dead. I knew all week it would come to this!

Proctor. [*Without conviction.*] They dismissed it. You heard her say—

Elizabeth. And what of tomorrow? She will cry me out until they take me!

Proctor. Sit you down.

Elizabeth. She wants me dead, John, you know it!

Proctor. I say sit down! [*She sits, trembling. He speaks quietly, trying to keep his wits.*] Now we must be wise, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth. [*With sarcasm, and a sense of being lost.*] Oh, indeed, indeed!

Proctor. Fear nothing. I'll find Ezekiel Cheever. I'll tell him she said it were all sport.

Elizabeth. John, with so many in the jail, more than Cheever's help is needed now, I think. Would you favor me with this? Go to Abigail.

Proctor. [*His soul hardening as he senses . . .*] What have I to say to Abigail?

Elizabeth. [*Delicately.*] John—grant me this. You have a faulty understanding of young girls. There is a promise made in any bed—

Proctor. [*Striving against his anger.*] What promise!

Elizabeth. Spoke or silent, a promise is surely made. And she may dote on it now—I am sure she does—and thinks to kill me, then to take my place.

[*PROCTOR'S anger is rising; he cannot speak.*]

Elizabeth. It is her dearest hope, John, I know it. There be a thousand names; why does she call mine? There be a certain danger in calling such a name—I am no Goody Good that sleeps in ditches, nor Osburn, drunk and half-witted. She'd dare not call out such a farmer's wife but there be monstrous profit in it. She thinks to take my place, John.

Proctor. She cannot think it!

[*He knows it is true.*]

Elizabeth. [*"Reasonably."*] John, have you ever shown her somewhat of contempt? She cannot pass you in the church but you will blush—

Proctor. I may blush for my sin.

Elizabeth. I think she sees another meaning in that blush.

Proctor. And what see you? What see you, Elizabeth?

Elizabeth. [*"Conceding."*] I think you be somewhat ashamed, for I am there, and she so close.

Proctor. When will you know me, woman? Were I stone I would have cracked for shame this seven month!

Elizabeth. Then go and tell her she's a whore. Whatever promise she may sense—break it, John, break it.

Proctor. [*Between his teeth.*] Good, then. I'll go. [*He starts for his rifle.*]

Elizabeth. [*Trembling, fearfully.*] Oh, how unwillingly!

Proctor. [*Turning on her, rifle in hand.*] I will curse her hotter than the oldest cinder in hell. But pray, begrudge me not my anger!

Elizabeth. Your anger! I only ask you—

Proctor. Woman, am I so base? Do you truly think me base?

Elizabeth. I never called you base.

Proctor. Then how do you charge me with such a promise? The promise that a stallion gives a mare I gave that girl!

Elizabeth. Then why do you anger with me when I bid you break it?

Proctor. Because it speaks deceit, and I am honest! But I'll plead no more! I see now your spirit twists around the single error of my life, and I will never tear it free!

Elizabeth. [*Crying out.*] You'll tear it free—when you come to know that I will be your only wife, or no wife at all! She has an arrow in you yet, John Proctor, and you know it well!

[*Quite suddenly, as though from the air, a figure appears in the doorway. They start slightly. It is MR. HALE. He is different now—drawn a little, and there is a quality of deference, even of guilt, about his manner now.*]

Hale. Good evening.

Proctor. [*Still in his shock.*] Why, Mr. Hale! Good evening to you, sir. Come in, come in.

Hale. [*To ELIZABETH.*] I hope I do not startle you.

Elizabeth. No, no, it's only that I heard no horse—

Hale. You are Goodwife Proctor.

Proctor. Aye; Elizabeth.

Hale. [*Nods, then.*] I hope you're not off to bed yet.

Proctor. [*Setting down his gun.*] No, no. [*HALE comes further into the room. And PROCTOR, to explain his nervousness.*] We are not used to visitors after dark, but you're welcome here. Will you sit you down, sir?

Hale. I will. [*He sits.*] Let you sit, Goodwife Proctor.

[*She does, never letting him out of her sight. There is a pause as HALE looks about the room.*]

Proctor. [*To break the silence.*] Will you drink cider, Mr. Hale?

Hale. No, it rebels my stomach; I have some further traveling yet tonight. Sit you down, sir. [*PROCTOR sits.*] I will not keep you long, but I have some business with you.

Proctor. Business of the court?

Hale. No—no, I come of my own, without the court's authority. Hear me. [*He wets his lips.*] I know not if you are aware, but your wife's name is—mentioned in the court.

Proctor. We know it, sir. Our Mary Warren told us. We are entirely amazed.

Hale. I am a stranger here, as you know.

And in my ignorance I find it hard to draw a clear opinion of them that come accused before the court. And so this afternoon, and now tonight, I go from house to house—I come from Rebecca Nurse's house and—

Elizabeth. [*Shocked.*] Rebecca's charged!

Hale. God forbid such a one be charged. She is, however—mentioned somewhat.

Elizabeth. [*With an attempt at a laugh.*] You will never believe, I hope, that Rebecca trafficked with the Devil.

Hale. Woman, it is possible.

Proctor. [*Taken aback.*] Surely you cannot think so.

Hale. This is a strange time, Mister. No man may longer doubt the powers of the dark are gathered in monstrous attack upon this village. There is too much evidence now to deny it. You will agree, sir?

Proctor. [*Evading.*] I—have no knowledge in that line. But it's hard to think so pious a woman be secretly a Devil's bitch after seventy year of such good prayer.

Hale. Aye. But the Devil is a wily one, you cannot deny it. However, she is far from accused, and I know she will not be. [*Pause.*] I thought, sir, to put some questions as to the Christian character of this house, if you'll permit me.

Proctor. [*Coldly, resentful.*] Why, we—have no fear of questions, sir.

Hale. Good, then. [*He makes himself more comfortable.*] In the book of record that Mr. Parris keeps, I note that you are rarely in the church on Sabbath Day.

Proctor. No sir, you are mistaken.

Hale. Twenty-six time in seventeen month, sir. I must call that rare. Will you tell me why you are so absent?

Proctor. Mr. Hale, I never knew I must account to that man for I come to church or stay at home. My wife were sick this winter.

Hale. So I am told. But you, Mister, why could you not come alone?

Proctor. I surely did come when I could, and when I could not I prayed in this house.

Hale. Mr. Proctor, your house is not a church; your theology must tell you that.

Proctor. It does, sir, it does; and it tells me that a minister may pray to God without he have golden candlesticks upon the altar.

Hale. What golden candlesticks?

Proctor. Since we built the church there were pewter candlesticks upon the altar; Francis Nurse made them, y'know, and a sweeter hand never touched the metal. But Parris came, and for twenty week he preach nothin' but golden candlesticks until he had them. I labor the earth from dawn of day to

blink of night, and I tell you true, when I look to heaven and see my money glaring at his elbows—it hurt my prayer, sir, it hurt my prayer. I think, sometimes, the man dreams cathedrals, not clapboard meetin' houses.

Hale. [Thinks, then.] And yet, Mister, a Christian on Sabbath Day must be in church. *[Pause.]* Tell me—you have three children?

Proctor. Aye. Boys.

Hale. How comes it that only two are baptized?

Proctor. [Starts to speak, then stops, then, as though unable to restrain this.] I like it not that Mr. Parris should lay his hand upon my baby. I see no light of God in that man. I'll not conceal it.

Hale. I must say it, Mr. Proctor; that is not for you to decide. The man's ordained, therefore the light of God is in him.

Proctor. [Flushed with resentment but trying to smile.] What's your suspicion, Mr. Hale?

Hale. No, no, I have no—

Proctor. I nailed the roof upon the church, I hung the door—

Hale. Oh, did you! That's a good sign, then.

Proctor. It may be I have been too quick to bring the man to book, but you cannot think we ever desired the destruction of religion. I think that's in your mind, is it not?

Hale. [Not altogether giving way.] I—have—there is a softness in your record, sir, a softness.

Elizabeth. I think, maybe, we have been too hard with Mr. Parris. I think so. But sure we never loved the Devil here.

Hale. [Nods, deliberating this. Then, with the voice of one administering a secret test.] Do you know your Commandments, Elizabeth?

Elizabeth. [Without hesitation, even eagerly.] I surely do. There be no mark of blame upon my life, Mr. Hale. I am a covenanted Christian woman.

Hale. And you, Mister?

Proctor. [A trifle unsteadily.] I—am sure I do, sir.

Hale. [Glances at her open face, then at JOHN, then.] Let you repeat them, if you will.

Proctor. The Commandments.

Hale. Aye.

Proctor. [Looking off, beginning to sweat.] Thou shalt not kill.

Hale. Aye.

Proctor. [Counting on his fingers.] Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not covet thy

neighbor's goods, nor make unto thee any graven image. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain; thou shalt have no other gods before me. *[With some hesitation.]* Thou shalt remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy. *[Pause. Then.]* Thou shalt honor thy father and mother. Thou shalt not bear false witness. *[He is stuck. He counts back on his fingers, knowing one is missing.]* Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.

Hale. You have said that twice, sir.

Proctor. [Lost.] Aye.

[He is flailing for it.]

Elizabeth. [Delicately.] Adultery, John.

Proctor. [As though a secret arrow had pained his heart.] Aye. *[Trying to grin it away—to HALE.]* You see, sir, between the two of us we do know them all. *[HALE only looks at PROCTOR, deep in his attempt to define this man. PROCTOR grows more uneasy.]* I think it be a small fault.

Hale. Theology, sir, is a fortress; no crack in a fortress may be accounted small.

[He rises; he seems worried now. He paces a little, in deep thought.]

Proctor. There be no love for Satan in this house, Mister.

Hale. I pray it, I pray it dearly. *[He looks to both of them, an attempt at a smile on his face, but his misgivings are clear.]* Well, then—I'll bid you good night.

Elizabeth. [Unable to restrain herself.] Mr. Hale. *[He turns.]* I do think you are suspecting me somewhat? Are you not?

Hale. [Obviously disturbed—and evasive.] Goody Proctor, I do not judge you. My duty is to add what I may to the godly wisdom of the court. I pray you both good health and good fortune. *[To JOHN.]* Good night, sir. *[He starts out.]*

Elizabeth. [With a note of desperation.] I think you must tell him, John.

Hale. What's that?

Elizabeth. [Restraining a call.] Will you tell him?

[Slight pause. HALE looks questioningly at JOHN.]

Proctor. [With difficulty.] I—I have no witness and cannot prove it, except my word be taken. But I know the children's sickness had naught to do with witchcraft.

Hale. [Stopped, struck.] Naught to do—?

Proctor. Mr. Parris discovered them sportin' in the woods. They were startled and took sick. *[Pause.]*

Hale. Who told you this?

Proctor. [Hesitates, then.] Abigail Williams.

Hale. Abigail!

Proctor. Aye.

Hale. [*His eyes wide.*] Abigail Williams told you it had naught to do with witchcraft!

Proctor. She told me the day you came, sir.

Hale. [*Suspiciously.*] Why—why did you keep this?

Proctor. I never knew until tonight that the world is gone daft with this nonsense.

Hale. Nonsense! Mister, I have myself examined Tituba, Sarah Good, and numerous others that have confessed to dealing with the Devil. They have *confessed* it.

Proctor. And why not, if they must hang for denyin' it? There are them that will swear to anything before they'll hang; have you never thought of that?

Hale. I have. I—I have indeed. [*It is his own suspicion, but he resists it. He glances at ELIZABETH, then at JOHN.*] And you—would you testify to this in court?

Proctor. I—had not reckoned with goin' into court. But if I must I will.

Hale. Do you falter here?

Proctor. I falter nothing, but I may wonder if my story will be credited in such a court. I do wonder on it, when such a steady-minded minister as you will suspicion such a woman that never lied, and cannot, and the world knows she cannot! I may falter somewhat, Mister; I am no fool.

Hale. [*Quietly—it has impressed him.*] *Proctor*, let you open with me now, for I have a rumor that troubles me. It's said you hold no belief that there may even be witches in the world. Is that true, sir?

Proctor. [*He knows this is critical, and is striving against his disgust with HALE and with himself for even answering.*] I know not what I have said, I may have said it. I have wondered if there be witches in the world—although I cannot believe they come among us now.

Hale. Then you do not believe—

Proctor. I have no knowledge of it; the Bible speaks of witches, and I will not deny them.

Hale. And you, woman?

Elizabeth. I—I cannot believe it.

Hale. [*Shocked.*] You cannot!

Proctor. Elizabeth, you bewilder him!

Elizabeth. [*To HALE.*] I cannot think the Devil may own a woman's soul, Mr. Hale, when she keeps an upright way, as I have. I am a good woman, I know it; and if you believe I may do only good work in the world, and yet be secretly bound to Satan, then I must tell you, sir, I do not believe it.

Hale. But, woman, you do believe there are witches in—

Elizabeth. If you think that I am one, then I say there are none.

Hale. You surely do not fly against the Gospel, the Gospel—

Proctor. She believe in the Gospel, every word!

Elizabeth. Question Abigail Williams about the Gospel, not myself!

[*HALE stares at her.*]

Proctor. She do not mean to doubt the Gospel, sir, you cannot think it. This be a Christian house, sir, a Christian house.

Hale. God keep you both; let the third child be quickly baptized, and go you without fail each Sunday in to Sabbath prayer; and keep a solemn, quiet way among you. I think—

[*GILES COREY appears in doorway.*]

Giles. John!

Proctor. Giles! What's the matter?

Giles. They take my wife.

[*FRANCIS NURSE enters.*]

Giles. And his Rebecca!

Proctor. [*To FRANCIS.*] Rebecca's in the jail!

Francis. Aye, Cheever come and take her in his wagon. We've only now come from the jail, and they'll not even let us in to see them.

Elizabeth. They've surely gone wild now, Mr. Hale!

Francis. [*Going to HALE.*] Reverend Hale! Can you not speak to the Deputy Governor? I'm sure he mistakes these people—

Hale. Pray calm yourself, Mr. Nurse.

Francis. My wife is the very brick and mortar of the church, Mr. Hale— [*Indicating GILES.*] —and Martha Corey, there cannot be a woman closer yet to God than Martha.

Hale. How is Rebecca charged, Mr. Nurse?

Francis. [*With a mocking, half-hearted laugh.*] For murder, she's charged! [*Mockingly quoting the warrant.*] "For the marvelous and supernatural murder of Goody Putnam's babies." What am I to do, Mr. Hale?

Hale. [*Turns from FRANCIS, deeply troubled, then.*] Believe me, Mr. Nurse, if Rebecca Nurse be tainted, then nothing's left to stop the whole green world from burning. Let you rest upon the justice of the court; the court will send her home, I know it.

Francis. You cannot mean she will be tried in court!

Hale. [*Pleading.*] Nurse, though our hearts break, we cannot flinch; these are new times, sir. There is a misty plot afoot so subtle we should be criminal to cling to old respects and ancient friendships. I have seen too many frightful proofs in court—the Devil is alive in Salem, and we dare not quail to follow wherever the accusing finger points!

Proctor. [*Angered.*] How may such a woman murder children?

Hale. [*In great pain.*] Man, remember, until an hour before the Devil fell, God thought him beautiful in Heaven.

Giles. I never said my wife were a witch, Mr. Hale; I only said she were reading books!

Hale. Mr. Corey, exactly what complaint were made on your wife?

Giles. That bloody mongrel Walcott charge her. Y'see, he buy a pig of my wife four or five year ago, and the pig died soon after. So he come dancin' in for his money back. So my Martha, she says to him, "Walcott, if you haven't the wit to feed a pig properly, you'll not live to own many," she says. Now he goes to court and claims that from that day to this he cannot keep a pig alive for more than four weeks because my Martha bewitch them with her books!

[*Enter EZEKIEL CHEEVER. A shocked silence.*]

Cheever. Good evening to you, Proctor.

Proctor. Why, Mr. Cheever. Good evening.

Cheever. Good evening, all. Good evening, Mr. Hale.

Proctor. I hope you come not on business of the court.

Cheever. I do, Proctor, aye. I am clerk of the court now, y'know.

[*Enter MARSHAL HERRICK, a man in his early thirties, who is somewhat shamefaced at the moment.*]

Giles. It's a pity, Ezekiel, an honest tailor that might have gone to Heaven must burn in Hell. You'll burn for this, do you know it?

Cheever. You know yourself I must do as I'm told. You surely know that, Giles. And I'd as lief you'd not be sending me to Hell. I like not the sound of it, I tell you; I like not the sound of it. [*He fears PROCTOR, but starts to reach inside his coat.*] Now believe me, Proctor, how heavy be the law, all its tonnage I do carry on my back tonight. [*He takes out a warrant.*] I have a warrant for your wife.

Proctor. [*To HALE.*] You said she were not charged!

Hale. I know nothin' of it. [*To CHEEVER.*] When were she charged?

Cheever. I am given sixteen warrant to-night, sir, and she is one.

Proctor. Who charged her?

Cheever. Why, Abigail Williams charge her.

Proctor. On what proof, what proof?

Cheever. [*Looking about the room.*] Mr. Proctor, I have little time. The court bid me search your house, but I like not to search a house. So will you hand me any poppets that your wife may keep here?

Proctor. Poppets?

Elizabeth. I never kept no poppets, not since I were a girl.

Cheever. [*Embarrassed, glancing toward the mantel where sits MARY WARREN's poppet.*] I spy a poppet, Goody Proctor.

Elizabeth. Oh! [*Going for it.*] Why, this is Mary's.

Cheever. [*Shyly.*] Would you please to give it to me?

Elizabeth. [*Handing it to him, asks HALE.*] Has the court discovered a text in poppets now?

Cheever. [*Carefully holding the poppet.*] Do you keep any others in this house?

Proctor. No, nor this one either till to-night. What signifies a poppet?

Cheever. Why, a poppet— [*He gingerly turns the poppet over.*] a poppet may signify— Now, woman, will you please to come with me?

Proctor. She will not! [*To ELIZABETH.*] Fetch Mary here.

Cheever. [*Ineptly reaching toward ELIZABETH.*] No, no, I am forbid to leave her from my sight.

Proctor. [*Pushing his arm away.*] You'll leave her out of sight and out of mind, Mister. Fetch Mary, Elizabeth.

[*ELIZABETH goes upstairs.*]

Hale. What signifies a poppet, Mr. Cheever?

Cheever. [*Turning the poppet over in his hands.*] Why, they say it may signify that she— [*He has lifted the poppet's skirt, and his eyes widen in astonished fear.*] Why, this, this—

Proctor. [*Reaching for the poppet.*] What's there?

Cheever. Why— [*He draws out a long needle from the poppet.*] it is a needle! Herrick, Herrick, it is a needle!

[*HERRICK comes toward him.*]

Proctor. [*Angrily, bewildered.*] And what signifies a needle?

Cheever. [*His hands shaking.*] Why, this go hard with her, Proctor, this—I had my

doubts, Proctor, I had my doubts, but here's calamity. [*To HALE, showing the needle.*] You see it, sir, it is a needle!

Hale. Why? What meanin' has it?

Cheever. [*Wide-eyed, trembling.*] The girl, the Williams girl, Abigail Williams, sir. She sat to dinner in Reverend Parris's house tonight, and without word nor warnin' she falls to the floor. Like a struck beast, he says, and screamed a scream that a bull would weep to hear. And he goes to save her, and, stuck two inches in the flesh of her belly, he draw a needle out. And demandin' of her how she come to be so stabbed, she [*To PROCTOR now.*] testify it were your wife's familiar spirit pushed it in.

Proctor. Why, she done it herself! [*To HALE.*] I hope you're not takin' this for proof, Mister!

[*HALE, struck by the proof, is silent.*]

Cheever. 'Tis hard proof! [*To HALE.*] I find here a poppet Goody Proctor keeps. I have found it, sir. And in the belly of the poppet a needle's stuck. I tell you true, Proctor, I never warranted to see such proof of Hell, and I bid you obstruct me not, for I—

[*Enter ELIZABETH with MARY WARREN. PROCTOR, seeing MARY WARREN, draws her by the arm to HALE.*]

Proctor. Here now! Mary, how did this poppet come into my house?

Mary Warren. [*Frightened for herself, her voice very small.*] What poppet's that, sir?

Proctor. [*Impatiently, pointing at the doll in CHEEVER's hand.*] This poppet, this poppet.

Mary Warren. [*Evasively, looking at it.*] Why, I—I think it is mine.

Proctor. It is your poppet, is it not?

Mary Warren. [*Not understanding the direction of this.*] It—is, sir.

Proctor. And how did it come into this house?

Mary Warren. [*Glancing about at the avid faces.*] Why—I made it in the court, sir, and—give it to Goody Proctor tonight.

Proctor. [*To HALE.*] Now, sir—do you have it?

Hale. Mary Warren, a needle have been found inside this poppet.

Mary Warren. [*Bewildered.*] Why, I mean no harm by it, sir.

Proctor. [*Quickly.*] You stuck that needle in yourself?

Mary Warren. I—I believe I did, sir, I—

Proctor. [*To HALE.*] What say you now?

Hale. [*Watching MARY WARREN closely.*]

Child, you are certain this be your natural memory? May it be, perhaps, that someone conjures you even now to say this?

Mary Warren. Conjures me? Why, no, sir, I am entirely myself, I think. Let you ask Susanna Walcott—she saw me sewin' it in court. Or better still: Ask Abby, Abby sat beside me when I made it.

Proctor. [*To HALE, of CHEEVER.*] Bid him begone. Your mind is surely settled now. Bid him out, Mr. Hale.

Elizabeth. What signifies a needle?

Hale. Mary—you charge a cold and cruel murder on Abigail.

Mary Warren. Murder! I charge no—

Hale. Abigail were stabbed tonight; a needle were found stuck into her belly—

Elizabeth. And she charges me?

Hale. Aye.

Elizabeth. [*Her breath knocked out.*] Why—! The girl is murder! She must be ripped out of the world!

Cheever. [*Pointing at ELIZABETH.*] You've heard that, sir! Ripped out of the world! Herrick, you heard it!

Proctor. [*Suddenly snatching the warrant out of CHEEVER's hands.*] Out with you.

Cheever. Proctor, you dare not touch the warrant.

Proctor. [*Ripping the warrant.*] Out with you!

Cheever. You've ripped the Deputy Governor's warrant, man!

Proctor. Damn the Deputy Governor! Out of my house!

Hale. Now, Proctor, Proctor!

Proctor. Get y'gone with them! You are a broken minister.

Hale. Proctor, if she is innocent, the court—

Proctor. If she is innocent! Why do you never wonder if Parris be innocent, or Abigail? Is the accuser always holy now? Were they born this morning as clean as God's fingers? I'll tell you what's walking Salem—vengeance is walking Salem. We are what we always were in Salem, but now the little crazy children are jangling the keys of the kingdom, and common vengeance writes the law! This warrant's vengeance! I'll not give my wife to vengeance!

Elizabeth. I'll go, John—

Proctor. You will not go!

Herrick. I have nine men outside. You cannot keep her. The law binds me, John, I cannot budge.

Proctor. [*To HALE, ready to break him.*] Will you see her taken?

Hale. Proctor, the court is just—

Proctor. Pontius Pilate! God will not let you wash your hands of this!

Elizabeth. John—I think I must go with them. [*He cannot bear to look at her.*] Mary, there is bread enough for the morning; you will bake, in the afternoon. Help Mr. Proctor as you were his daughter—you owe me that, and much more. [*She is fighting her weeping. To PROCTOR.*] When the children wake, speak nothing of witchcraft—it will frighten them.

[*She cannot go on.*]

Proctor. I will bring you home. I will bring you soon.

Elizabeth. Oh, John, bring me soon!

Proctor. I will fall like an ocean on that court! Fear nothing, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth. [*With great fear.*] I will fear nothing. [*She looks about the room, as though to fix it in her mind.*] Tell the children I have gone to visit someone sick.

[*She walks out the door, HERRICK and CHEEVER behind her. For a moment, PROCTOR watches from the doorway. The clank of chain is heard.*]

Proctor. Herrick! Herrick, don't chain her! [*He rushes out the door. From outside.*] Damn you, man, you will not chain her! Off with them! I'll not have it! I will not have her chained!

[*There are other men's voices against his. HALE, in a fever of guilt and uncertainty, turns from the door to avoid the sight; MARY WARREN bursts into tears and sits weeping. GILES COREY calls to HALE.*]

Giles. And yet silent, minister? It is fraud, you know it is fraud! What keeps you, man?

[*PROCTOR is half braced, half pushed into the room by two deputies and HERRICK.*]

Proctor. I'll pay you, Herrick, I will surely pay you!

Herrick. [*Panting.*] In God's name, John, I cannot help myself. I must chain them all. Now let you keep inside this house till I am gone!

[*He goes out with his deputies.*]

[*PROCTOR stands there, gulping air. Horses and a wagon creaking are heard.*]

Hale. [*In great uncertainty.*] Mr. Proctor—

Proctor. Out of my sight!

Hale. Charity, Proctor, charity. What I have heard in her favor, I will not fear to testify in court. God help me, I cannot judge her guilty or innocent—I know not. Only this consider: the world goes mad, and it profit nothing you should lay the cause to the vengeance of a little girl.

Proctor. You are a coward! Though you

be ordained in God's own tears, you are a coward now!

Hale. Proctor, I cannot think God be provoked so grandly by such a petty cause. The jails are packed—our greatest judges sit in Salem now—and hangin's promised. Man, we must look to cause proportionate. Were there murder done, perhaps, and never brought to light? Abomination? Some secret blasphemy that stinks to Heaven? Think on cause, man, and let you help me to discover it. For there's your way, believe it, there is your only way, when such confusion strikes upon the world. [*He goes to GILES and FRANCIS.*] Let you counsel among yourselves; think on your village and what may have drawn from heaven such thundering wrath upon you all. I shall pray God open up our eyes. [*HALE goes out.*]

Francis. [*Struck by HALE's mood.*] I never heard no murder done in Salem.

Proctor. [*He has been reached by HALE's words.*] Leave me, Francis, leave me.

Giles. [*Shaken.*] John—tell me, are we lost?

Proctor. Go home now, Giles. We'll speak on it tomorrow.

Giles. Let you think on it. We'll come early, eh?

Proctor. Aye. Go now, Giles.

Giles. Good night, then.

[*GILES COREY goes out.*]

Mary Warren. [*After a moment, in a fearful squeak of a voice.*] Mr. Proctor, very likely they'll let her come home once they're given proper evidence.

Proctor. You're coming to the court with me, Mary. You will tell it in the court.

Mary Warren. I cannot charge murder on Abigail.

Proctor. [*Moving menacingly toward her.*] You will tell the court how that poppet come here and who stuck the needle in.

Mary Warren. She'll kill me for sayin' that! [*PROCTOR continues toward her.*] Abby'll charge lechery on you, Mr. Proctor!

Proctor. [*Halting.*] She's told you!

Mary Warren. I have known it, sir. She'll ruin you with it, I know she will.

Proctor. [*Hesitating, and with deep hatred of himself.*] Good. Then her saintliness is done with. [*MARY backs from him.*] We will slide together into our pit; you will tell the court what you know.

Mary Warren. [*In terror.*] I cannot, they'll turn on me—

[*PROCTOR strides and catches her, and she is repeating, "I cannot, I cannot!"*]

Proctor. My wife will never die for me! I will bring your guts into your mouth but that goodness will not die for me!

Mary Warren. [*Struggling to escape him.*] I cannot do it, I cannot!

Proctor. [*Grasping her by the throat as though he would strangle her.*] Make your peace with it! Now Hell and Heaven grapple on our backs, and all our old pretense is ripped away—make your peace! [*He throws her to the floor, where she sobs, "I cannot, I cannot . . ." And now, half to himself, staring, and turning to the open door.*]

Peace. It is a providence, and no great change; we are only what we always were, but naked now. [*He walks as though toward a great horror, facing the open sky.*] Aye, naked! And the wind, God's icy wind, will blow!

[*And she is over and over again sobbing, "I cannot, I cannot, I cannot," as THE CURTAIN FALLS*]

ACT THREE

The vestry room of the Salem meeting house, now serving as the anteroom of the General Court.

As the curtain rises, the room is empty, but for sunlight pouring through two high windows in the back wall. The room is solemn, even forbidding. Heavy beams jut out, boards of random widths make up the walls. At the right are two doors leading into the meeting house proper, where the court is being held. At the left another door leads outside.

There is a plain bench at the left, and another at the right. In the center a rather long meeting table, with stools and a considerable armchair snugged up to it.

[Through the partitioning wall at the right we hear a prosecutor's voice, JUDGE HATHORNE'S, asking a question; then a woman's voice, MARTHA COREY'S, replying.]

Hathorne's Voice. Now, Martha Corey, there is abundant evidence in our hands to show that you have given yourself to the reading of fortunes. Do you deny it?

Martha Corey's Voice. I am innocent to a witch. I know not what a witch is.

Hathorne's Voice. How do you know, then, that you are not a witch?

Martha Corey's Voice. If I were, I would know it.

Hathorne's Voice. Why do you hurt these children?

Martha Corey's Voice. I do not hurt them. I scorn it!

Giles' Voice. [*Roaring.*] I have evidence for the court!

[*Voices of townspeople rise in excitement.*]

Danforth's Voice. You will keep your seat!

Giles' Voice. Thomas Putnam is reaching out for land!

Danforth's Voice. Remove that man, Marshal!

Giles' Voice. You're hearing lies, lies!

[*A roaring goes up from the people.*]

Hathorne's Voice. Arrest him, excellency!

Giles' Voice. I have evidence. Why will you not hear my evidence?

[*The door opens and GILES is half carried into the vestry room by HERRICK.*]

Giles. Hands off, damn you, let me go!

Herrick. Giles, Giles!

Giles. Out of my way, Herrick! I bring evidence—

Herrick. You cannot go in there, Giles; it's a court!

[*Enter HALE from the court, followed by FRANCIS NURSE.*]

Hale. Pray be calm a moment.

Giles. You, Mr. Hale, go in there and demand I speak.

Hale. A moment, sir, a moment.

Giles. They'll be hangin' my wife!

[*JUDGE HATHORNE enters. He is in his sixties, a bitter, remorseless Salem judge.*]

Hathorne. How do you dare come roarin' into this court! Are you gone daft, Corey?

Giles. You're not a Boston judge yet, Hathorne. You'll not call me daft!

[*Enter DEPUTY GOVERNOR DANFORTH and, behind him, EZEKIEL CHEEVER and PARRIS. On his appearance, silence falls. DANFORTH is a grave man in his sixties, of some humor and sophistication that does not, however, interfere with an exact loyalty to his position and his cause. He comes down to GILES, who awaits his wrath.*]

Danforth. [*Looking directly at GILES.*] Who is this man?

Parris. Giles Corey, sir, and a more contentious—

Giles. [*To PARRIS.*] I am asked the question, and I am old enough to answer it! [*To DANFORTH, who impresses him and to whom he smiles through his strain.*] My name is Corey, sir, Giles Corey. I have six hundred acres, and timber in addition. It is my wife you be condemning now.

[*He indicates the courtroom.*]

Danforth. And how do you imagine to help her cause with such contemptuous riot? Now be gone. Your old age alone keeps you out of jail for this.

Giles. [*Beginning to plead.*] They be tellin' lies about my wife, sir, I—

Danforth. Do you take it upon yourself to determine what this court shall believe and what it shall set aside?

Giles. Your Excellency, we mean no disrespect for—

Danforth. Disrespect indeed! It is disruption, Mister. This is the highest court of the supreme government of this province; do you know it?

Giles. [*Beginning to weep.*] Your Excellency, I only said she were readin' books, sir, and they come and take her out of my house for—

Danforth. [*Mystified.*] Books! What books?

Giles. [*Through helpless sobs.*] It is my third wife, sir; I never had no wife that be so taken with books, and I thought to find the cause of it, d'y'see, but it were no witch I blamed her for. [*He is openly weeping.*] I have broke charity with the woman, I have broke charity with her.

[*He covers his face, ashamed. DANFORTH is respectfully silent.*]

Hale. Excellency, he claims hard evidence for His wife's defense. I think that in all justice you must—

Danforth. Then let him submit his evidence in proper affidavit. You are certainly aware of our procedure here, Mr. Hale. [*To HERRICK.*] Clear this room.

Herrick. Come now, Giles.

[*He gently pushes COREY out.*]

Francis. We are desperate, sir; we come here three days now and cannot be heard.

Danforth. Who is this man?

Francis. Francis Nurse, Your Excellency.

Hale. His wife's Rebecca that were condemned this morning.

Danforth. Indeed! I am amazed to find you in such uproar. I have only good report of your character, Mr. Nurse.

Hathorne. I think they must both be arrested in contempt, sir.

Danforth. [*To FRANCIS.*] Let you write your plea, and in due time I will—

Francis. Excellency, we have proof for your eyes; God forbid you shut them to it. The girls, sir, the girls are frauds.

Danforth. What's that?

Francis. We have proof of it, sir. They are all deceiving you.

[*DANFORTH is shocked, but studying FRANCIS.*]

Hathorne. This is contempt, sir, contempt!

Danforth. Peace, Judge Hathorne. Do you know who I am, Mr. Nurse?

Francis. I surely do, sir, and I think you must be a wise judge to be what you are.

Danforth. And do you know that near to four hundred are in the jails from Marblehead to Lynn, and upon my signature?

Francis. I—

Danforth. And seventy-two condemned to hang by that signature?

Francis. Excellency, I never thought to say it to such a weighty judge, but you are deceived.

[*Enter GILES COREY from the left. All turn to see as he beckons in MARY WARREN with PROCTOR. MARY is keeping her eyes to the ground; PROCTOR has her elbow as though she were near collapse.*]

Parris. [*On seeing her, in shock.*] Mary Warren! [*He goes directly to bend close to her face.*] What are you about here?

Proctor. [*Pressing PARRIS away from her with a gentle but firm motion of protectiveness.*] She would speak with the Deputy Governor.

Danforth. [*Shocked by this, turns to HERRICK.*] Did you not tell me Mary Warren were sick in bed?

Herrick. She were, Your Honor. When I go to fetch her to the court last week, she said she were sick.

Giles. She has been strivin' with her soul all week, Your Honor; she comes now to tell the truth of this to you.

Danforth. Who is this?

Proctor. John Proctor, sir. Elizabeth Proctor is my wife.

Parris. Beware this man, Your Excellency, this man is mischief.

Hale. [*Excitedly.*] I think you must hear the girl, sir, she—

Danforth. [*Who has become very interested in MARY WARREN and only raises a hand toward HALE.*] Peace. What would you tell us, Mary Warren?

[PROCTOR looks at her, but she cannot speak.]

Proctor. She never saw no spirits, sir.

Danforth. [With great alarm and surprise, to MARY.] Never saw no spirits!

Giles. [Eagerly.] Never.

Proctor. [Reaching into his jacket.] She has signed a deposition, sir—

Danforth. [Instantly.] No, no, I accept no depositions. [He is rapidly calculating this; he turns from her to PROCTOR.] Tell me, Mr. Proctor, have you given out this story in the village?

Proctor. We have not.

Parris. They've come to overthrow the court, sir! This man is—

Danforth. I pray you, Mr. Parris. Do you know, Mr. Proctor, that the entire contention of the state in these trials is that the voice of Heaven is speaking through the children?

Proctor. I know that, sir.

Danforth. [Thinks, staring at PROCTOR, then turns to MARY WARREN.] And you, Mary Warren, how came you to cry out people for sending their spirits against you?

Mary Warren. It were pretense, sir.

Danforth. I cannot hear you.

Proctor. It were pretense, she says.

Danforth. Ah? And the other girls? Susanna Walcott, and—the others? They are also pretending?

Mary Warren. Aye, sir.

Danforth. [Wide-eyed.] Indeed.

[Pause. He is baffled by this. He turns to study PROCTOR's face.]

Parris. [In a sweat.] Excellency, you surely cannot think to let so vile a lie be spread in open court!

Danforth. Indeed not, but it strike hard upon me that she will dare come here with such a tale. Now, Mr. Proctor, before I decide whether I shall hear you or not, it is my duty to tell you this. We burn a hot fire here; it melts down all concealment.

Proctor. I know that, sir.

Danforth. Let me continue. I understand well, a husband's tenderness may drive him to extravagance in defense of a wife. Are you certain in your conscience, Mister, that your evidence is the truth?

Proctor. It is. And you will surely know it.

Danforth. And you thought to declare this revelation in the open court before the public?

Proctor. I thought I would, aye—with your permission.

Danforth. [His eyes narrowing.] Now, sir, what is your purpose in so doing?

Proctor. Why, I—I would free my wife, sir.

Danforth. There lurks nowhere in your heart, nor hidden in your spirit, any desire to undermine this court?

Proctor. [With the faintest faltering.] Why, no, sir.

Cheever. [Clears his throat, awakening.] I—Your Excellency.

Danforth. Mr. Cheever.

Cheever. I think it be my duty, sir—[Kindly, to PROCTOR.] You'll not deny it, John. [To DANFORTH.] When we come to take his wife, he damned the court and ripped your warrant.

Parris. Now you have it!

Danforth. He did that, Mr. Hale?

Hale. [Takes a breath.] Aye, he did.

Proctor. It were a temper, sir. I knew not what I did.

Danforth. [Studying him.] Mr. Proctor.

Proctor. Aye, sir.

Danforth. [Straight into his eyes.] Have you ever seen the Devil?

Proctor. No, sir.

Danforth. You are in all respects a Gospel Christian?

Proctor. I am, sir.

Parris. Such a Christian that will not come to church but once in a month!

Danforth. [Restrained—he is curious.] Not come to church?

Proctor. I—I have no love for Mr. Parris. It is no secret. But God I surely love.

Cheever. He plow on Sunday, sir.

Danforth. Plow on Sunday!

Cheever. [Apologetically.] I think it be evidence, John. I am an official of the court, I cannot keep it.

Proctor. I—I have once or twice plowed on Sunday. I have three children, sir, and until last year my land give little.

Giles. You'll find other Christians that do plow on Sunday if the truth be known.

Hale. Your Honor, I cannot think you may judge the man on such evidence.

Danforth. I judge nothing. [Pause. He keeps watching PROCTOR, who tries to meet his gaze.] I tell you straight, Mister—I have seen marvels in this court. I have seen people choked before my eyes by spirits; I have seen them stuck by pins and slashed by daggers. I have until this moment not the slightest reason to suspect that the children may be deceiving me. Do you understand my meaning?

Proctor. Excellency, does it not strike upon you that so many of these women have lived so long with such upright reputation, and—

Parris. Do you read the Gospel, Mr. Proctor?

Proctor. I read the Gospel.

Parris. I think not, or you should surely know that Cain were an upright man, and yet he did kill Abel.

Proctor. Aye, God tells us that. [*To DANFORTH.*] But who tells us Rebecca Nurse murdered seven babies by sending out her spirit on them? It is the children only, and this one will swear she lied to you.

[*DANFORTH considers, then beckons HATHORNE to him. HATHORNE leans in, and he speaks in his ear. HATHORNE nods.*]

Hathorne. Aye, she's the one.

Danforth. Mr. Proctor, this morning, your wife send me a claim in which she states that she is pregnant now.

Proctor. My wife pregnant!

Danforth. There be no sign of it—we have examined her body.

Proctor. But if she say she is pregnant, then she must be! That woman will never lie, Mr. Danforth.

Danforth. She will not?

Proctor. Never, sir, never.

Danforth. We have thought it too convenient to be credited. However, if I should tell you now that I will let her be kept another month; and if she begin to show her natural signs, you shall have her living yet another year until she is delivered—what say you to that? [*JOHN PROCTOR is struck silent.*] Come now. You say your only purpose is to save your wife. Good, then, she is saved at least this year, and a year is long. What say you, sir? It is done now. [*In conflict, PROCTOR glances at FRANCIS and GILES.*] Will you drop this charge?

Proctor. I—I think I cannot.

Danforth. [*Now an almost imperceptible hardness in his voice.*] Then your purpose is somewhat larger.

Parris. He's come to overthrow this court, Your Honor!

Proctor. These are my friends. Their wives are also accused—

Danforth. [*With a sudden briskness of manner.*] I judge you not, sir. I am ready to hear your evidence.

Proctor. I come not to hurt the court; I only—

Danforth. [*Cutting him off.*] Marshal, go into the court and bid Judge Stoughton and Judge Sewall declare recess for one hour. And let them go to the tavern, if they will. All witnesses and prisoners are to be kept in the building.

Herrick. Aye, sir. [*Very deferentially.*]

If I may say it, sir, I know this man all my life. It is a good man, sir.

Danforth. [*It is the reflection on himself he resents.*] I am sure of it, Marshal. [*HERRICK nods, then goes out.*] Now, what deposition do you have for us, Mr. Proctor? And I beg you be clear, open as the sky, and honest.

Proctor. [*As he takes out several papers.*] I am no lawyer, so I'll—

Danforth. The pure in heart need no lawyers. Proceed as you will.

Proctor. [*Handing DANFORTH a paper.*] Will you read this first, sir? It's a sort of testament. The people signing it declare their good opinion of Rebecca, and my wife, and Martha Corey.

[*DANFORTH looks down at the paper.*]

Parris. [*To enlist DANFORTH's sarcasm.*] Their good opinion!

[*But DANFORTH goes on reading, and PROCTOR is heartened.*]

Proctor. These are all landholding farmers, members of the church. [*Delicately, trying to point out a paragraph.*] If you'll notice, sir—they've known the women many years and never saw no sign they had dealings with the Devil.

[*PARRIS nervously moves over and reads over DANFORTH's shoulder.*]

Danforth. [*Glancing down a long list.*] How many names are here?

Francis. Ninety-one, Your Excellency.

Parris. [*Sweating.*] These people should be summoned. [*DANFORTH looks up at him questioningly.*] For questioning.

Francis. [*Trembling with anger.*] Mr. Danforth, I gave them all my word no harm would come to them for signing this.

Parris. This is a clear attack upon the court!

Hale. [*To PARRIS, trying to contain himself.*] Is every defense an attack upon the court? Can no one—?

Parris. All innocent and Christian people are happy for the courts in Salem! These people are gloomy for it. [*To DANFORTH directly.*] And I think you will want to know, from each and every one of them, what discontents them with you!

Hathorne. I think they ought to be examined, sir.

Danforth. It is not necessarily an attack, I think. Yet—

Francis. These are all covenanted Christians, sir.

Danforth. Then I am sure they may have nothing to fear. [*Hands CHEEVER the paper.*] Mr. Cheever, have warrants drawn for all of these—arrest for examination. [*To*

PROCTOR.] Now, Mister, what other information do you have for us? [FRANCIS is still standing, horrified.] You may sit, Mr. Nurse.

Francis. I have brought trouble on these people; I have—

Danforth. No, old man, you have not hurt these people if they are of good conscience. But you must understand, sir, that a person is either with this court or he must be counted against it; there be no road between. This is a sharp time, now, a precise time—we live no longer in the dusky afternoon when evil mixed itself with good and befuddled the world. Now, by God's grace, the shining sun is up, and them that fear not light will surely praise it. I hope you will be one of those. [MARY WARREN suddenly sobs.] She's not hearty, I see.

Proctor. No, she's not, sir. [To MARY, bending to her, holding her hand, quietly.] Now remember what the angel Raphael said to the boy Tobias. Remember it.

Mary Warren. [Hardly audible.] Aye.

Proctor. "Do that which is good, and no harm shall come to thee."

Mary Warren. Aye.

Danforth. Come, man, we wait you.

[MARSHAL HERRICK returns, and takes his post at the door.]

Giles. John, my deposition, give him mine. other paper.] This is Mr. Corey's deposition.

Proctor. Aye. [He hands DANFORTH another paper.]

Danforth. Oh?

[He looks down at it. Now HATHORNE comes behind him and reads with him.]

Hathorne. [Suspiciously.] What lawyer drew this, Corey?

Giles. You know I never hired a lawyer in my life, Hathorne.

Danforth. [Finishing the reading.] It is very well phrased. My compliments. Mr. Parris, if Mr. Putnam is in the court, will you bring him in? [HATHORNE takes the deposition, and walks to the window with it. PARRIS goes into the court.] You have no legal training, Mr. Corey?

Giles. [Very pleased.] I have the best, sir—I am thirty-three time in court in my life. And always plaintiff, too.

Danforth. Oh, then you're much put-upon.

Giles. I am never put-upon; I know my rights, sir, and I will have them. You know, your father tried a case of mine—might be thirty-five year ago, I think.

Danforth. Indeed.

Giles. He never spoke to you of it?

Danforth. No, I cannot recall it.

Giles. That's strange, he give me nine pound damages. He were a fair judge, your

father. Y'see, I had a white mare that time, and this fellow come to borrow the mare— [Enter PARRIS with THOMAS PUTNAM. When he sees PUTNAM, GILES' ease goes; he is hard.] Aye, there he is.

Danforth. Mr. Putnam, I have here an accusation by Mr. Corey against you. He states that you coldly prompted your daughter to cry witchery upon George Jacobs that is now in jail.

Putnam. It is a lie.

Danforth. [Turning to GILES.] Mr. Putnam states your charge is a lie. What say you to that?

Giles. [Furious, his fists clenched.] A fart on Thomas Putnam, that is what I say to that!

Danforth. What proof do you submit for your charge, sir?

Giles. My proof is there! [Pointing to the paper.] If Jacobs hangs for a witch he forfeit up his property—that's law! And there is none but Putnam with the coin to buy so great a piece. This man is killing his neighbors for their land!

Danforth. But proof, sir, proof.

Giles. [Pointing at his deposition.] The proof is there! I have it from an honest man who heard Putnam say it! The day his daughter cried out on Jacobs, he said she'd given him a fair gift of land.

Hathorne. And the name of this man?

Giles. [Taken aback.] What name?

Hathorne. The man that give you this information.

Giles. [Hesitates, then.] Why, I—I cannot give you his name.

Hathorne. And why not?

Giles. [Hesitates, then bursts out.] You know well why not! He'll lay in jail if I give his name!

Hathorne. This is contempt of the court, Mr. Danforth!

Danforth. [To avoid that.] You will surely tell us the name.

Giles. I will not give you no name. I mentioned my wife's name once and I'll burn in hell long enough for that. I stand mute.

Danforth. In that case, I have no choice but to arrest you for contempt of this court, do you know that?

Giles. This is a hearing; you cannot clap me for contempt of a hearing.

Danforth. Oh, it is a proper lawyer! Do you wish me to declare the court in full session here? Or will you give me good reply?

Giles. [Faltering.] I cannot give you no name, sir, I cannot.

Danforth. You are a foolish old man. Mr. Cheever, begin the record. The court is now in session. I ask you, Mr. Corey—

Proctor. [*Breaking in.*] Your Honor—he has the story in confidence, sir, and he—

Parris. The Devil lives on such confidences! [*To DANFORTH.*] Without confidences there could be no conspiracy, Your Honor!

Hathorne. I think it must be broken, sir.

Danforth. [*To GILES.*] Old man, if your informant tells the truth let him come here openly like a decent man. But if he hide in anonymity I must know why. Now sir, the government and central church demand of you the name of him who reported Mr. Thomas Putnam a common murderer.

Hale. Excellency—

Danforth. Mr. Hale.

Hale. We cannot blink it more. There is a prodigious fear of this court in the country—

Danforth. Then there is a prodigious guilt in the country. Are you afraid to be questioned here?

Hale. I may only fear the Lord, sir, but there is fear in the country nevertheless.

Danforth. [*Angered now.*] Reproach me not with the fear in the country; there is fear in the country because there is a moving plot to topple Christ in the country!

Hale. But it does not follow that every-one accused is part of it.

Danforth. No uncorrupted man may fear this court, Mr. Hale! None! [*To GILES.*] You are under arrest in contempt of this court. Now sit down and take counsel with yourself, or you will be set in the jail until you decide to answer all questions.

[*GILES COREY makes a rush for PUTNAM. PROCTOR lunges and holds him.*]

Proctor. No, Giles!

Giles. [*Over PROCTOR'S shoulder at PUTNAM.*] I'll cut your throat, Putnam, I'll kill you yet!

Proctor. [*Forcing him into a chair.*] Peace, Giles, peace. [*Releasing him.*] We'll prove ourselves. Now we will.

[*He starts to turn to DANFORTH.*]

Giles. Say nothin' more, John. [*Pointing at DANFORTH.*] He's only playin' you! He means to hang us all!

[*MARY WARREN bursts into sobs.*]

Danforth. This is a court of law, Mister. I'll have no effrontery here!

Proctor. Forgive him, sir, for his old age. Peace, Giles, we'll prove it all now. [*He lifts up MARY'S chin.*] You cannot weep, Mary. Remember the angel, what he say to the boy. Hold to it, now; there is your

rock. [*MARY quiets. He takes out a paper, and turns to DANFORTH.*] This is Mary Warren's deposition. I—I would ask you remember, sir, while you read it, that until two week ago she were no different than the other children are today. [*He is speaking reasonably, restraining all his fears, his anger, his anxiety.*] You saw her scream, she howled, she swore familiar spirits choked her; she even testified that Satan, in the form of women now in jail, tried to win her soul away, and then when she refused—

Danforth. We know all this.

Proctor. Aye, sir. She swears now that she never saw Satan; nor any spirit, vague or clear, that Satan may have sent to hurt her. And she declares her friends are lying now.

[*PROCTOR starts to hand DANFORTH the deposition, and HALE comes up to DANFORTH in a trembling state.*]

Hale. Excellency, a moment. I think this goes to the heart of the matter.

Danforth. [*With deep misgivings.*] It surely does.

Hale. I cannot say he is an honest man; I know him little. But in all justice, sir, a claim so weighty cannot be argued by a farmer. In God's name, sir, stop here; send him home and let him come again with a lawyer—

Danforth. [*Patiently.*] Now look you, Mr. Hale—

Hale. Excellency, I have signed seventy-two death warrants; I am a minister of the Lord, and I dare not take a life without there be a proof so immaculate no slightest qualm of conscience may doubt it.

Danforth. Mr. Hale, you surely do not doubt my justice.

Hale. I have this morning signed away the soul of Rebecca Nurse, Your Honor. I'll not conceal it, my hand shakes yet as with a wound! I pray you, sir, *this* argument let lawyers present to you.

Danforth. Mr. Hale, believe me; for a man of such terrible learning you are most bewildered—I hope you will forgive me. I have been thirty-two year at the bar, sir, and I should be confounded were I called upon to defend these people. Let you consider, now— [*To PROCTOR and the others.*] And I bid you all do likewise. In an ordinary crime, how does one defend the accused? One calls up witnesses to prove his innocence. But witchcraft is *ipso facto*, on its face and by its nature, an invisible crime, is it not? Therefore, who may possibly be witness to it? The witch and the victim. None

other. Now we cannot hope the witch will accuse herself; granted? Therefore, we must rely upon her victims—and they do testify, the children certainly do testify. As for the witches, none will deny that we are most eager for all their confessions. Therefore, what is left for a lawyer to bring out? I think I have made my point. Have I not?

Hale. But this child claims the girls are not truthful, and if they are not—

Danforth. That is precisely what I am about to consider, sir. What more may you ask of me? Unless you doubt my probity?

Hale. [Defeated.] I surely do not, sir. Let you consider it, then.

Danforth. And let you put your heart to rest. Her deposition, Mr. Proctor.

[PROCTOR hands it to him. HATHORNE rises, goes beside DANFORTH, and starts reading. PARRIS comes to his other side. DANFORTH looks at JOHN PROCTOR, then proceeds to read. HALE gets up, finds position near the judge, reads too. PROCTOR glances at GILES. FRANCIS prays silently, hands pressed together. CHEEVER waits placidly, the sublime official, dutiful. MARY WARREN sobs once. JOHN PROCTOR touches her head reassuringly. Presently DANFORTH lifts his eyes, stands up, takes out a kerchief and blows his nose. The others stand aside as he moves in thought toward the window.]

Parris. [Hardly able to contain his anger and fear.] I should like to question—

Danforth. [His first real outburst, in which his contempt for PARRIS is clear.] Mr. Parris, I bid you be silent! [He stands in silence, looking out the window. Now, having established that he will set the gait.] Mr. Cheever, will you go into the court and bring the children here? [CHEEVER gets up and goes out upstage. DANFORTH now turns to MARY.] Mary Warren, how came you to this turnabout? Has Mr. Proctor threatened you for this deposition?

Mary Warren. No, sir.

Danforth. Has he ever threatened you?

Mary Warren. [Weaker.] No, sir.

Danforth. [Sensing a weakening.] Has he threatened you?

Mary Warren. No, sir.

Danforth. Then you tell me that you sat in my court, callously lying, when you knew that people would hang by your evidence? [She does not answer.] Answer me!

Mary Warren. [Almost inaudibly.] I did, sir.

Danforth. How were you instructed in your life? Do you not know that God damns

all liars? [She cannot speak.] Or is it now that you lie?

Mary Warren. No, sir—I am with God now.

Danforth. You are with God now.

Mary Warren. Aye, sir.

Danforth. [Containing himself.] I will tell you this—you are either lying now, or you were lying in the court, and in either case you have committed perjury and you will go to jail for it. You cannot lightly say you lied, Mary. Do you know that?

Mary Warren. I cannot lie no more. I am with God, I am with God.

[But she breaks into sobs at the thought of it, and the right door opens, and enter SUSANNA WALCOTT, MERCY LEWIS, BETTY PARRIS, and finally ABIGAIL. CHEEVER comes to DANFORTH.]

Cheever. Ruth Putnam's not in the court, sir, nor the other children.

Danforth. These will be sufficient. Sit you down, children. [Silently they sit.] Your friend, Mary Warren, has given us a deposition. In which she swears that she never saw familiar spirits, apparitions, nor any manifest of the Devil. She claims as well that none of you have seen these things either. [Slight pause.] Now, children, this is a court of law. The law, based upon the Bible, and the Bible, writ by Almighty God, forbid the practice of witchcraft, and describe death as the penalty thereof. But likewise, children, the law and Bible damn all bearers of false witness. [Slight pause.] Now then. It does not escape me that this deposition may be devised to blind us; it may well be that Mary Warren has been conquered by Satan, who sends her here to distract our sacred purpose. If so, her neck will break for it. But if she speak true, I bid you now drop your guile and confess your pretense, for a quick confession will go easier with you. [Pause.] Abigail Williams, rise. [ABIGAIL slowly rises.] Is there any truth in this?

Abigail. No, sir.

Danforth. [Thinks, glances at MARY, then back to ABIGAIL.] Children, a very augur bit will now be turned into your souls until your honesty is proved. Will either of you change your positions now, or do you force me to hard questioning?

Abigail. I have naught to change, sir. She lies.

Danforth. [To MARY.] You would still go on with this?

Mary Warren. [Faintly.] Aye, sir.

Danforth. [Turning to ABIGAIL.] A poppet were discovered in Mr. Proctor's house,

stabbed by a needle. Mary Warren claims that you sat beside her in the court when she made it, and that you saw her make it and witnessed how she herself stuck her needle into it for safe-keeping. What say you to that?

Abigail. [With a slight note of indignation.] It is a lie, sir.

Danforth. [After a slight pause.] While you worked for Mr. Proctor, did you see poppets in that house?

Abigail. Goody Proctor always kept poppets.

Proctor. Your Honor, my wife never kept no poppets. Mary Warren confesses it was her poppet.

Cheever. Your Excellency.

Danforth. Mr. Cheever.

Cheever. When I spoke with Goody Proctor in that house, she said she never kept no poppets. But she said she did keep poppets when she were a girl.

Proctor. She has not been a girl these fifteen years, Your Honor.

Hathorne. But a poppet will keep fifteen years, will it not?

Proctor. It will keep if it is kept, but Mary Warren swears she never saw no poppets in my house, nor anyone else.

Parris. Why could there not have been poppets hid where no one ever saw them?

Proctor. [Furious.] There might also be a dragon with five legs in my house, but no one has ever seen it.

Parris. We are here, Your Honor, precisely to discover what no one has ever seen.

Proctor. Mr. Danforth, what profit this girl to turn herself about? What may Mary Warren gain but hard questioning and worse?

Danforth. You are charging Abigail Williams with a marvelous cool plot to murder, do you understand that?

Proctor. I do, sir. I believe she means to murder.

Danforth. [Pointing at ABIGAIL, incredulously.] This child would murder your wife?

Proctor. It is not a child. Now hear me, sir. In the sight of the congregation she were twice this year put out of this meetin' house for laughter during prayer.

Danforth. [Shocked, turning to ABIGAIL.] What's this? Laughter during—!

Parris. Excellency, she were under Tituba's power at that time, but she is solemn now.

Giles. Aye, now she is solemn and goes to hang people!

Danforth. Quiet, man.

Hathorne. Surely it have no bearing on

the question, sir. He charges contemplation of murder.

Danforth. Aye. [He studies ABIGAIL for a moment, then.] Continue, Mr. Proctor.

Proctor. Mary. Now tell the Governor how you danced in the woods.

Parris. [Instantly.] Excellency, since I come to Salem this man is blackening my name. He—

Danforth. In a moment, sir. [To MARY WARREN, sternly, and surprised.] What's this dancing?

Mary Warren. I— [She glances at ABIGAIL, who is staring down at her remorselessly. Then, appealing to PROCTOR.] Mr. Proctor—

Proctor. [Taking it right up.] Abigail leads the girls to the woods, Your Honor, and they have danced there naked—

Parris. Your Honor, this—

Proctor. [At once.] Mr. Parris discovered them himself in the dead of night! There's the "child" she is!

Danforth. [It is growing into a nightmare, and he turns, astonished, to PARRIS.] Mr. Parris—

Parris. I can only say, sir, that I never found any of them naked, and this man is—

Danforth. But you discovered them dancing in the woods? [Eyes on PARRIS, he points at ABIGAIL.] Abigail?

Hale. Excellency, when I first arrived from Beverly, Mr. Parris told me that.

Danforth. Do you deny it, Mr. Parris?

Parris. I do not, sir, but I never saw any of them naked.

Danforth. But she have danced?

Parris. [Unwillingly.] Aye, sir.

[DANFORTH, as though with new eyes, looks at ABIGAIL.]

Hathorne. Excellency, will you permit me? [He points at MARY WARREN.]

Danforth. [With great worry.] Pray, proceed.

Hathorne. You say you never saw no spirits, Mary, were never threatened or afflicted by any manifest of the Devil or the Devil's agents.

Mary Warren. [Very faintly.] No, sir.

Hathorne. [With a gleam of victory.] And yet, when people accused of witchery confronted you in court, you would faint, saying their spirits came out of their bodies and choked you—

Mary Warren. That were pretense, sir.

Danforth. I cannot hear you.

Mary Warren. Pretense, sir.

Parris. But you did turn cold, did you not? I myself picked you up many times,

and your skin were icy. Mr. Danforth, you—

Danforth. I saw that many times.

Proctor. She only pretended to faint, Your Excellency. They're all marvelous pretenders.

Hathorne. Then can she pretend to faint now?

Proctor. Now?

Parris. Why not? Now there are no spirits attacking her, for none in this room is accused of witchcraft. So let her turn herself cold now, let her pretend she is attacked now, let her faint. [*He turns to MARY WARREN.*] Faint!

Mary Warren. Faint?

Parris. Aye, faint. Prove to us how you pretended in the court so many times.

Mary Warren. [*Looking to PROCTOR.*] I—cannot faint now, sir.

Proctor. [*Alarmed, quietly.*] Can you not pretend it?

Mary Warren. I— [*She looks about as though searching for the passion to faint.*] I—have no sense of it now, I—

Danforth. Why? What is lacking now?

Mary Warren. I—cannot tell, sir, I—

Danforth. Might it be that here we have no afflicting spirit loose, but in the court there were some?

Mary Warren. I never saw no spirits.

Parris. Then see no spirits now, and prove to us that you can faint by your own will, as you claim.

Mary Warren. [*Stares, searching for the emotion of it, and then shakes her head.*] I—cannot do it.

Parris. Then you will confess, will you not? It were attacking spirits made you faint!

Mary Warren. No, sir, I—

Parris. Your Excellency, this is a trick to blind the court!

Mary Warren. It's not a trick. [*She stands.*] I—I used to faint because I—I thought I saw spirits.

Danforth. Thought you saw them!

Mary Warren. But I did not, Your Honor.

Hathorne. How could you think you saw them unless you saw them?

Mary Warren. I—I cannot tell how, but I did. I—I heard the other girls screaming, and you, Your Honor, you seemed to believe them, and I—I— It were only sport in the beginning, sir, but then the whole world cried spirits, spirits, and I—I promise you, Mr. Danforth, I only thought I saw them but I did not. [*DANFORTH peers at her.*]

Parris. [*Smiling, but nervous because DANFORTH seems to be struck by MARY*

WARREN's story.] Surely Your Excellency is not taken by this simple lie.

Danforth. [*Turning worriedly to ABIGAIL.*] Abigail. I bid you now search your heart and tell me this—and beware of it, child, to God every soul is precious and His vengeance is terrible on them that take life without cause. Is it possible, child, that the spirits you have seen are illusion only, some deception that may cross your mind when—

Abigail. Why, this—this—is a base question, sir.

Danforth. Child, I would have you consider it—

Abigail. I have been hurt, Mr. Danforth; I have seen my blood runnin' out! I have been near to murdered every day because I done my duty pointing out the Devil's people—and this is my reward? To be mistrusted, denied, questioned like a—

Danforth. [*Weakening.*] Child, I do not mistrust you—

Abigail. [*In an open threat.*] Let you beware, Mr. Danforth. Think you to be so mighty that the power of Hell may not turn your wits? Beware of it! There is—

[*Suddenly, from an accusatory attitude, her face turns, looking into the air above—it is truly frightened.*]

Danforth. [*Apprehensively.*] What is it, child?

Abigail. [*Looking about in the air, clasping her arms around her as though cold.*] I—I know not. A wind, a cold wind, has come. [*Her eyes fall on MARY WARREN.*]

Mary Warren. [*Terrified, pleading.*] Abby!

Mercy Lewis. [*Shivering.*] Your Honor, I freeze!

Proctor. They're pretending!

Hathorne. [*Touching ABIGAIL's hand.*] She is cold, Your Honor, touch her.

Mercy Lewis. [*Through chattering teeth.*] Mary, do you send this shadow on me?

Mary Warren. Lord, save me!

Susanna Walcott. I freeze, I freeze!

Abigail. [*Shivering visibly.*] It is a wind, a wind!

Mary Warren. Abby, don't do that!

Danforth. [*Himself engaged and entered by ABIGAIL.*] Mary Warren, do you witch her? I say to you, do you send your spirit out?

[*With a hysterical cry MARY WARREN starts to run. PROCTOR catches her.*]

Mary Warren. [*Almost collapsing.*] Let me go, Mr. Proctor, I cannot, I cannot—

Abigail. [*Crying to Heaven.*] Oh, Heavenly Father, take away this shadow!

[Without warning or hesitation, PROCTOR leaps at ABIGAIL and, grabbing her by the hair, pulls her to her feet. She screams in pain. DANFORTH, astonished, cries, "What are you about?" and HATHORNE and PARRIS call, "Take your hands off her!" and out of it all comes PROCTOR'S roaring voice.]

Proctor. How do you call Heaven! Whore! Whore!

[HERRICK breaks PROCTOR from her.]

Herrick. John!

Danforth. Man! Man, what do you—

Proctor. [Breathless and in agony.] It is a whore!

Danforth. [Dumfounded.] You charge—?

Abigail. Mr. Danforth, he is lying!

Proctor. Mark her! Now she'll suck a scream to stab me with, but—

Danforth. You will prove this! This will not pass!

Proctor. [Trembling, his life collapsing about him.] I have known her, sir. I have known her.

Danforth. You—you are a lecher?

Francis. [Horried.] John, you cannot say such a—

Proctor. Oh, Francis, I wish you had some evil in you that you might know me! [To DANFORTH.] A man will not cast away his good name. You surely know that.

Danforth. [Dumfounded.] In—in what time? In what place?

Proctor. [His voice about to break, and his shame great.] In the proper place—where my beasts are bedded. On the last night of my joy, some eight months past. She used to serve me in my house, sir. [He has to clamp his jaw to keep from weeping.] A man may think God sleeps, but God sees everything, I know it now. I beg you, sir, I beg you—see her what she is. My wife, my dear good wife, took this girl soon after, sir, and put her out on the highroad. And being what she is, a lump of vanity, sir—[He is being overcome.] Excellency, forgive me, forgive me. [Angrily against himself, he turns away from the GOVERNOR for a moment. Then, as though to cry out is his only means of speech left.] She thinks to dance with me on my wife's grave! And well she might, for I thought of her softly. God help me, I lusted, and there is a promise in such sweat. But it is a whore's vengeance, and you must see it; I set myself entirely in your hands. I know you must see it now.

Danforth. [Blanched, in horror, turning to ABIGAIL.] You deny every scrap and tittle of this?

Abigail. If I must answer that, I will leave and I will not come back again!

[DANFORTH seems unsteady.]

Proctor. I have made a bell of my honor! I have rung the doom of my good name—you will believe me, Mr. Danforth! My wife is innocent, except she knew a whore when she saw one!

Abigail. [Stepping up to DANFORTH.] What look do you give me? [DANFORTH cannot speak.] I'll not have such looks!

[She turns and starts for the door.]

Danforth. You will remain where you are! [HERRICK steps into her path. She comes up short, fire in her eyes.] Mr. Parris, go into the court and bring Goodwife Proctor out.

Parris. [Objecting.] Your Honor, this is all a—

Danforth. [Sharply to PARRIS.] Bring her out! And tell her not one word of what's been spoken here. And let you knock before you enter. [PARRIS goes out.] Now we shall touch the bottom of this swamp. [To PROCTOR.] Your wife, you say, is an honest woman.

Proctor. In her life, sir, she have never lied. There are them that cannot sing, and them that cannot weep—my wife cannot lie. I have paid much to learn it, sir.

Danforth. And when she put this girl out of your house, she put her out for a harlot?

Proctor. Aye, sir.

Danforth. And knew her for a harlot?

Proctor. Aye, sir, she knew her for a harlot.

Danforth. Good then. [To ABIGAIL.] And if she tell me, child, it were for harlotry, may God spread His mercy on you! [There is a knock. He calls to the door.] Hold! [To ABIGAIL.] Turn your back. Turn your back. [To PROCTOR.] Do likewise. [Both turn their backs—ABIGAIL with indignant slowness.] Now let neither of you turn to face Goody Proctor. No one in this room is to speak one word, or raise a gesture aye or nay. [He turns toward the door, calls.] Enter! [The door opens. ELIZABETH enters with PARRIS. PARRIS leaves her. She stands alone, her eyes looking for PROCTOR.] Mr. Cheever, report this testimony in all exactness. Are you ready?

Cheever. Ready, sir.

Danforth. Come here, woman. [ELIZABETH comes to him, glancing at PROCTOR'S back.] Look at me only, not at your husband. In my eyes only.

Elizabeth. [Faintly.] Good, sir.

Danforth. We are given to understand that at one time you dismissed your servant, Abigail Williams.

Elizabeth. That is true, sir.

Danforth. For what cause did you dismiss her? [*Slight pause. Then ELIZABETH tries to glance at PROCTOR.*] You will look in my eyes only and not at your husband. The answer is in your memory and you need no help to give it to me. Why did you dismiss Abigail Williams?

Elizabeth. [*Not knowing what to say, sensing a situation, wetting her lips to stall for time.*] She—dissatisfied me. [*Pause.*] And my husband.

Danforth. In what way dissatisfied you?

Elizabeth. She were——

[*She glances at PROCTOR for a cue.*]

Danforth. Woman, look at me! [*ELIZABETH does.*] Were she slovenly? Lazy? What disturbance did she cause?

Elizabeth. Your Honor, I—In that time I were sick. And I—— My husband is a good and righteous man. He is never drunk as some are, nor wastin' his time at the shovel-board, but always at his work. But in my sickness—you see, sir, I were a long time sick after my last baby, and I thought I saw my husband somewhat turning from me. And this girl—— [*She turns to ABIGAIL.*]

Danforth. Look at me.

Elizabeth. Aye, sir. Abigail Williams—— [*She breaks off.*]

Danforth. What of Abigail Williams?

Elizabeth. I came to think he fancied her. And so one night I lost my wits, I think, and put her out on the highroad.

Danforth. Your husband—did he indeed turn from you?

Elizabeth. [*In agony.*] My husband—is a goodly man, sir.

Danforth. Then he did not turn from you.

Elizabeth. [*Starting to glance at PROCTOR.*] He——

Danforth. [*Reaches out and holds her face, then.*] Look at me! To your own knowledge, has John Proctor ever committed the crime of lechery? [*In a crisis of indecision she cannot speak.*] Answer my question! Is your husband a lecher!

Elizabeth. [*Faintly.*] No, sir.

Danforth. Remove her, Marshal.

Proctor. Elizabeth, tell the truth!

Danforth. She has spoken. Remove her!

Proctor. [*Crying out.*] Elizabeth, I have confessed it!

Elizabeth. Oh, God!

[*The door closes behind her.*]

Proctor. She only thought to save my name!

Hale. Excellency, it is a natural lie to tell; I beg you, stop now before another is con-

demned! I may shut my conscience to it no more—private vengeance is working through this testimony! From the beginning this man has struck me true. By my oath to Heaven, I believe him now, and I pray you call back his wife before we——

Danforth. She spoke nothing of lechery, and this man has lied!

Hale. I believe him! [*Pointing at ABIGAIL.*] This girl has always struck me false! She has——

[*ABIGAIL, with a weird, wild, chilling cry, screams up to the ceiling.*]

Abigail. You will not! Begone! Begone, I say!

Danforth. What is it, child? [*But ABIGAIL, pointing with fear, is now raising up her frightened eyes, her awed face, toward the ceiling—the GIRLS are doing the same—and now HATHORNE, HALE, PUTNAM, CHEEVER, HERRICK, and DANFORTH do the same.*] What's there? [*He lowers his eyes from the ceiling, and now he is frightened; there is real tension in his voice.*] Child! [*She is transfixed—with all the GIRLS, she is whimpering open-mouthed, agape at the ceiling.*] Girls! Why do you——?

Mercy Lewis. [*Pointing.*] It's on the beam! Behind the rafter!

Danforth. [*Looking up.*] Where!

Abigail. Why——? [*She gulps.*] Why do you come, yellow bird?

Proctor. Where's a bird? I see no bird!

Abigail. [*To the ceiling.*] My face? My face?

Proctor. Mr. Hale——

Danforth. Be quiet!

Proctor. [*TO HALE.*] Do you see a bird?

Danforth. Be quiet!!

Abigail. [*To the ceiling, in a genuine conversation with the "bird," as though trying to talk it out of attacking her.*] But God made my face; you cannot want to tear my face. Envy is a deadly sin, Mary.

Mary Warren. [*On her feet with a spring, and horrified, pleading.*] Abby!

Abigail. [*Unperturbed, continuing to the "bird."*] Oh, Mary, this is a black art to change your shape. No, I cannot, I cannot stop my mouth; it's God work I do.

Mary Warren. Abby, I'm here!

Proctor. [*Frantically.*] They're pretending, Mr. Danforth!

Abigail. [*Now she takes a backward step, as though in fear the bird will swoop down momentarily.*] Oh, please, Mary! Don't come down.

Susanna Walcott. Her claws, she's stretching her claws!

Proctor. Lies, lies.

Abigail. [*Backing further, eyes still fixed above.*] Mary, please don't hurt me!

Mary Warren. [*To DANFORTH.*] I'm not hurting her!

Danforth. [*To MARY WARREN.*] Why does she see this vision?

Mary Warren. She sees nothin'!

Abigail. [*Now staring full front as though hypnotized, and mimicking the exact tone of MARY WARREN'S cry.*] She sees nothin'!

Mary Warren. [*Pleading.*] Abby, you mustn't!

Abigail and All the Girls. [*All transfixed.*] Abby, you mustn't!

Mary Warren. [*To all the GIRLS.*] I'm here, I'm here!

Girls. I'm here, I'm here!

Danforth. [*Horried.*] Mary Warren! Draw back your spirit out of them!

Mary Warren. Mr. Danforth!

Girls. [*Cutting her off.*] Mr. Danforth!

Danforth. Have you compacted with the Devil? Have you?

Mary Warren. Never, never!

Girls. Never, never!

Danforth. [*Growing hysterical.*] Why can they only repeat you?

Proctor. Give me a whip—I'll stop it!

Mary Warren. They're sporting. They—!

Girls. They're sporting!

Mary Warren. [*Turning on them all hysterically and stamping her feet.*] Abby, stop it!

Girls. [*Stamping their feet.*] Abby, stop it!

Mary Warren. Stop it!

Girls. Stop it!

Mary Warren. [*Screaming it out at the top of her lungs, and raising her fists.*] Stop it!!

Girls. [*Raising their fists.*] Stop it!!

[MARY WARREN, utterly confounded, and becoming overwhelmed by ABIGAIL'S—and the GIRLS'—utter conviction, starts to whimper, hands half raised, powerless, and all the GIRLS begin whimpering exactly as she does.]

Danforth. A little while ago you were afflicted. Now it seems you afflict others; where did you find this power?

Mary Warren. [*Staring at ABIGAIL.*] I—have no power.

Girls. I have no power.

Proctor. They're gulling you, Mister!

Danforth. Why did you turn about this past two weeks? You have seen the Devil, have you not?

Hale. [*Indicating ABIGAIL and the GIRLS.*] You cannot believe them!

Mary Warren. I—

Proctor. [*Sensing her weakening.*] Mary, God damns all liars!

Danforth. [*Pounding it into her.*] You have seen the Devil, you have made compact with Lucifer, have you not?

Proctor. God damns liars, Mary!

[MARY utters something unintelligible, staring at ABIGAIL, who keeps watching the "bird" above.]

Danforth. I cannot hear you. What do you say? [MARY utters again unintelligibly.] You will confess yourself or you will hang! [*He turns her roughly to face him.*] Do you know who I am? I say you will hang if you do not open with me!

Proctor. Mary, remember the angel Raphael—do that which is good and—

Abigail. [*Pointing upward.*] The wings! Her wings are spreading! Mary, please, don't, don't—!

Hale. I see nothing, Your Honor!

Danforth. Do you confess this power! [*He is an inch from her face.*] Speak!

Abigail. She's going to come down! She's walking the beam!

Danforth. Will you speak!

Mary Warren. [*Staring in horror.*] I cannot!

Girls. I cannot!

Parris. Cast the Devil out! Look him in the face! Trample him! We'll save you, Mary, only stand fast against him and—

Abigail. [*Looking up.*] Look out! She's coming down!

[*She and all the GIRLS run to one wall, shielding their eyes. And now, as though cornered, they let out a gigantic scream, and MARY, as though infected, opens her mouth and screams with them. Gradually ABIGAIL and the GIRLS leave off, until only MARY is left there, staring up at the "bird," screaming madly. All watch her, horrified by this evident fit. PROCTOR strides to her.*]

Proctor. Mary, tell the Governor what they—

[*He has hardly got a word out, when, seeing him coming for her, she rushes out of his reach, screaming in horror.*]

Mary Warren. Don't touch me—don't touch me!

[*At which the GIRLS halt at the door.*]

Proctor. [*Astonished.*] Mary!

Mary Warren. [*Pointing at PROCTOR.*] You're the Devil's man!

[*He is stopped in his tracks.*]

Parris. Praise God!

Girls. Praise God!

Proctor. [*Numbed.*] Mary, how—?

Mary Warren. I'll not hang with you! I love God, I love God.

Danforth. [To MARY.] He bid you do the Devil's work?

Mary Warren. [Hysterically, indicating PROCTOR.] He come at me by night and every day to sign, to sign, to—

Danforth. Sign what?

Parris. The Devil's book? He come with a book?

Mary Warren. [Hysterically, pointing at PROCTOR, fearful of him.] My name, he want my name. "I'll murder you," he says, "if my wife hangs! We must go and overthrow the court," he says!

[DANFORTH'S head jerks toward PROCTOR, shock and horror in his face.]

Proctor. [Turning, appealing to HALE.] Mr. Hale!

Mary Warren. [Her sobs beginning.] He wake me every night, his eyes were like coals and his fingers claw my neck, and I sign, I sign . . .

Hale. Excellency, this child's gone wild!

Proctor. [As DANFORTH'S wide eyes pour on him.] Mary, Mary!

Mary Warren. [Screaming at him.] No, I love God; I go your way no more. I love God, I bless God. [Sobbing, she rushes to ABIGAIL.] Abby, Abby, I'll never hurt you more!

[They all watch, as ABIGAIL, out of her infinite charity, reaches out and draws the sobbing MARY to her, and then looks up to DANFORTH.]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT FOUR

A cell in Salem jail, that fall.

At the back is a high barred window; near it, a great heavy door. Along the walls are two benches.

The place is in darkness but for the moonlight seeping through the bars. It appears empty. Presently footsteps are heard coming down a corridor beyond the wall, keys rattle, and the door swings open. MARSHAL HERRICK enters with a lantern.

[He is nearly drunk, and heavy-footed. He goes to a bench and nudges a bundle of rags lying on it.]

Herrick. Sarah, wake up! Sarah Good! [He then crosses to the other bench.]

Danforth. [To PROCTOR.] What are you? [PROCTOR is beyond speech in his anger.] You are combined with anti-Christ, are you not? I have seen your power; you will not deny it! What say you, Mister?

Hale. Excellency—

Danforth. I will have nothing from you, Mr. Hale! [To PROCTOR.] Will you confess yourself befouled with Hell, or do you keep that black allegiance yet? What say you?

Proctor. [His mind wild, breathless.] I say—I say—God is dead!

Parris. Hear it, hear it!

Proctor. [Laughs insanely, then.] A fire, a fire is burning! I hear the boot of Lucifer, I see his filthy face! And it is my face, and yours, Danforth! For them that quail to bring men out of ignorance, as I have quailed, and as you quail now when you know in all your black hearts that this be fraud—God damns our kind especially, and we will burn, we will burn together!

Danforth. Marshal! Take him and Corey with him to the jail!

Hale. [Starting across to the door.] I denounce these proceedings!

Proctor. You are pulling Heaven down and raising up a whore!

Hale. I denounce these proceedings, I quit this court!

[He slams the door to the outside behind him.]

Danforth. [Calling to him in a fury.] Mr. Hale! Mr. Hale!

Sarah Good. [Rising in her rags.] Oh, Majesty! Comin', comin'! Tituba, he's here, His Majesty's come!

Herrick. Go to the north cell; this place is wanted now.

[He hangs his lantern on the wall. TITUBA sits up.]

Tituba. That don't look to me like his Majesty; look to me like the marshal.

Herrick. [Taking out a flask.] Get along with you now, clear this place.

[He drinks, and SARAH GOOD comes and peers up into his face.]

Sarah Good. Oh, is it you, Marshal? I thought sure you be the devil comin' for us. Could I have a sip of cider for me goin' away?

Herrick. [*Handing her the flask.*] And where are you off to, Sarah?

Tituba. [*As SARAH drinks.*] We goin' to Barbados, soon the Devil gits here with the feathers and the wings.

Herrick. Oh? A happy voyage to you.

Sarah Good. A pair of bluebirds wingin' southerly, the two of us! Oh, it be a grand transformation, Marshal!

[*She raises the flask to drink again.*]

Herrick. [*Taking the flask from her lips.*] You'd best give me that or you'll never rise off the ground. Come along now.

Tituba. I'll speak to him for you, if you desires to come along, Marshal.

Herrick. I'd not refuse it, Tituba; it's the proper morning to fly into Hell.

Tituba. Oh, it be no Hell in Barbados. Devil, him be pleasureman in Barbados, him be singin' and dancin' in Barbados. It's you folks—you riles him up 'round here; it be too cold 'round here for that Old Boy. He freeze his soul in Massachusetts, but in Barbados he just as sweet and— [*A bel-
lowing cow is heard, and TITUBA leaps up
and calls to the window.*] Aye, sir! That's him, Sarah!

Sarah Good. I'm here, Majesty!

[*They hurriedly pick up their rags as
HOPKINS, a guard, enters.*]

Hopkins. The Deputy Governor's arrived.

Herrick. [*Grabbing TITUBA.*] Come along, come along.

Tituba. [*Resisting him.*] No, he comin' for me. I goin' home!

Herrick. [*Pulling her to the door.*] That's not Satan, just a poor old cow with a hat-ful of milk. Come along now, out with you!

Tituba. [*Calling to the window.*] Take me home, Devil! Take me home!

Sarah Good. [*Following the shouting
TITUBA out.*] Tell him I'm goin', Tituba! Now you tell him Sarah Good is goin' too!

[*In the corridor outside TITUBA calls on*

—"Take me home, Devil; Devil take me home!" and HOPKINS' voice orders her to move on. HERRICK returns and begins to push old rags and straw into a corner. Hearing footsteps, he turns, and enter DANFORTH and JUDGE HATHORNE. They are in greatcoats and wear hats against the bitter cold. They are followed in by CHEEVER, who carries a dispatch case and a flat wooden box containing his writing materials.]

Herrick. Good morning, Excellency.

Danforth. Where is Mr. Parris?

Herrick. I'll fetch him.

[*He starts for the door.*]

Danforth. Marshal. [*HERRICK stops.*] When did Reverend Hale arrive?

Herrick. It were toward midnight, I think.

Danforth. [*Suspiciously.*] What is he about here?

Herrick. He goes among them that will hang, sir. And he prays with them. He sits with Goody Nurse now. And Mr. Parris with him.

Danforth. Indeed. That man have no authority to enter here, Marshal. Why have you let him in?

Herrick. Why, Mr. Parris command me, sir. I cannot deny him.

Danforth. Are you drunk, Marshal?

Herrick. No, sir; it is a bitter night, and I have no fire here.

Danforth. [*Containing his anger.*] Fetch Mr. Parris.

Herrick. Aye, sir.

Danforth. There is a prodigious stench in this place.

Herrick. I have only now cleared the people out for you.

Danforth. Beware hard drink, Marshal.

Herrick. Aye, sir.

[*He waits an instant for further orders.*

But DANFORTH, in dissatisfaction, turns his back on him, and HERRICK goes out.

There is a pause. DANFORTH stands in thought.]

Hathorne. Let you question Hale, Excellency; I should not be surprised he have been preaching in Andover lately.

Danforth. We'll come to that; speak nothing of Andover. Parris prays with him. That's strange.

[*He blows on his hands, moves toward the window, and looks out.*]

Hathorne. Excellency, I wonder if it be wise to let Mr. Parris so continuously with the prisoners. [*DANFORTH turns to him, interested.*] I think, sometimes, the man has a mad look these days.

Danforth. Mad?

Hathorne. I met him yesterday coming out of his house, and I bid him good morning—and he wept and went his way. I think it is not well the village sees him so unsteady.

Danforth. Perhaps he have some sorrow.

Cheever. [*Stamping his feet against the cold.*] I think it be the cows, sir.

Danforth. Cows?

Cheever. There be so many cows wanderin' the highroads, now their masters are in the jails, and much disagreement who they will belong to now. I know Mr. Parris be arguin' with farmers all yesterday—there is great contention, sir, about the cows. Con-

tention make him weep, sir; it were always a man that weep for contention.

[*He turns, as do HATHORNE and DANFORTH, hearing someone coming up the corridor. DANFORTH raises his head as PARRIS enters. He is gaunt, frightened, and sweating in his greatcoat.*]

Parris. [*To DANFORTH, instantly.*] Oh, good morning, sir, thank you for coming, I beg your pardon wakin' you so early. Good morning, Judge Hathorne.

Danforth. Reverend Hale have no right to enter this—

Parris. Excellency, a moment.

[*He hurries back and shuts the door.*]

Hathorne. Do you leave him alone with the prisoners?

Danforth. What's his business here?

Parris. [*Prayerfully holding up his hands.*] Excellency, hear me. It is a providence. Reverend Hale has returned to bring Rebecca Nurse to God.

Danforth. [*Surprised.*] He bids her confess?

Parris. [*Sitting.*] Hear me. Rebecca have not given me a word this three month since she came. Now she sits with him, and her sister and Martha Corey and two or three others, and he pleads with them, confess their crimes and save their lives.

Danforth. Why—this is indeed a providence. And they soften, they soften?

Parris. Not yet, not yet. But I thought to summon you, sir, that we might think on whether it be not wise, to— [*He dares not say it.*] I had thought to put a question, sir, and I hope you will not—

Danforth. Mr. Parris, be plain, what troubles you?

Parris. There is news, sir, that the court—the court must reckon with. My niece, sir, my niece—I believe she has vanished.

Danforth. Vanished!

Parris. I had thought to advise you of it earlier in the week, but—

Danforth. Why? How long is she gone?

Parris. This be the third night. You see, sir, she told me she would stay a night with Mercy Lewis. And next day, when she does not return, I send to Mr. Lewis to inquire. Mercy told him she would sleep in my house for a night.

Danforth. They are both gone?!

Parris. [*In fear of him.*] They are, sir.

Danforth. [*Alarmed.*] I will send a party for them. Where may they be?

Parris. Excellency, I think they be aboard a ship. [*DANFORTH stands agape.*] My daughter tells me how she heard them speak-

ing of ships last week, and tonight I discover my—my strongbox is broke into.

[*He presses his fingers against his eyes to keep back tears.*]

Hathorne. [*Astonished.*] She have robbed you?

Parris. Thirty-one pound is gone. I am penniless.

[*He covers his face and sobs.*]

Danforth. Mr. Parris, you are a brainless man!

[*He walks in thought, deeply worried.*]

Parris. Excellency, it profit nothing you should blame me. I cannot think they would run off except they fear to keep in Salem any more. [*He is pleading.*] Mark it, sir, Abigail had close knowledge of the town, and since the news of Andover has broken here—

Danforth. Andover is remedied. The court returns there on Friday, and will resume examinations.

Parris. I am sure of it, sir. But the rumor here speaks rebellion in Andover, and it—

Danforth. There is no rebellion in Andover!

Parris. I tell you what is said here, sir. Andover have thrown out the court, they say, and will have no part of witchcraft. There be a faction here, feeding on that news, and I tell you true, sir, I feel there will be riot here.

Hathorne. Riot! Why, at every execution I have seen naught but high satisfaction in the town.

Parris. Judge Hathorne—it were another sort that hanged till now. Rebecca Nurse is no Bridget that lived three year with Bishop before she married him. John Proctor is not Isaac Ward that drank his family to ruin. [*To DANFORTH.*] I would to God it were not so, Excellency, but these people have great weight yet in the town. Let Rebecca stand upon the gibbet and send up some righteous prayer, and I fear she'll wake a vengeance on you.

Hathorne. Excellency, she is condemned a witch. The court have—

Danforth. [*In deep concern, raising a hand to HATHORNE.*] Pray you. [*To PARRIS.*] How do you propose, then?

Parris. Excellency, I would postpone these hangin's for a time.

Danforth. There will be no postponement.

Parris. Now Mr. Hale's returned, there is hope, I think—for if he bring even one of these to God, that confession surely damns the others in the public eye, and none may doubt more that they are all linked to Hell. This way, unconfessed and claiming innocence, doubts are multiplied, many

honest people will weep for them, and our good purpose is lost in their tears.

Danforth. [After thinking a moment, then going to CHEEVER.] Give me the list.

[CHEEVER opens the dispatch case, searches.]

Parris. It cannot be forgot, sir, that when I summoned the congregation for John Proctor's excommunication there were hardly thirty people come to hear it. That speak a discontent, I think, and—

Danforth. [Studying the list.] There will be no postponement.

Parris. Excellency—

Danforth. Now, sir—which of these in your opinion may be brought to God? I will strive with him till dawn.

[He hands the list to PARRIS, who merely glances at it.]

Parris. There is not sufficient time till dawn.

Danforth. I shall do my utmost. Which of them do you have hope for?

Parris. [Not even glancing at the list now, and in a quavering voice, quietly.] Excellency—a dagger—

[He chokes up.]

Danforth. What do you say?

Parris. Tonight, when I open my door to leave my house—a dagger clattered to the ground. [Silence. DANFORTH absorbs this. Now PARRIS cries out.] You cannot hang this sort. There is danger for me. I dare not step outside at night!

[REVEREND HALE enters. They look at him for an instant in silence. He is steeped in sorrow, exhausted, and more direct than he ever was.]

Danforth. Accept my congratulations, Reverend Hale; we are gladdened to see you returned to your good work.

Hale. [Coming to DANFORTH now.] You must pardon them. They will not budge.

[HERRICK enters, waits.]

Danforth. [Conciliatory.] You misunderstand, sir; I cannot pardon these when twelve are already hanged for the same crime. It is not just.

Parris. [With failing heart.] Rebecca will not confess?

Hale. The sun will rise in a few minutes. Excellency, I must have more time.

Danforth. Now hear me, and beguile yourselves no more. I will not receive a single plea for pardon or postponement. Them that will not confess will hang. Twelve are already executed; the names of these seven are given out, and the village expects to see them die this morning. Postponement now speaks a floundering on my part; re-

prieve or pardon must cast doubt upon the guilt of them that died till now. While I speak God's law, I will not crack its voice with whimpering. If retaliation is your fear, know this—I should hang ten thousand that dared to rise against the law, and an ocean of salt tears could not melt the resolution of the statutes. Now draw yourselves up like men and help me, as you are bound by Heaven to do. Have you spoken with them all, Mr. Hale?

Hale. All but Proctor. He is in the dungeon.

Danforth. [To HERRICK.] What's Proctor's way now?

Herrick. He sits like some great bird; you'd not know he lived except he will take food from time to time.

Danforth. [After thinking a moment.] His wife—his wife must be well on with child now.

Herrick. She is, sir.

Danforth. What think you, Mr. Parris? You have closer knowledge of this man; might her presence soften him?

Parris. It is possible, sir. He have not laid eyes on her these three months. I should summon her.

Danforth. [To HERRICK.] Is he yet adamant? Has he struck at you again?

Herrick. He cannot, sir, he is chained to the wall now.

Danforth. [After thinking on it.] Fetch Goody Proctor to me. Then let you bring him up.

Herrick. Aye, sir.

[HERRICK goes. There is silence.]

Hale. Excellency, if you postpone a week and publish to the town that you are striving for their confessions, that speak mercy on your part, not faltering.

Danforth. Mr. Hale, as God have not empowered me like Joshua to stop this sun from rising, so I cannot withhold from them the perfection of their punishment.

Hale. [Harder now.] If you think God wills you to raise rebellion, Mr. Danforth, you are mistaken!

Danforth. [Instantly.] You have heard rebellion spoken in the town?

Hale. Excellency, there are orphans wandering from house to house; abandoned cattle bellow on the highroads, the stink of rotting crops hangs everywhere, and no man knows when the harlots' cry will end his life—and you wonder yet if rebellion's spoke? Better you should marvel how they do not burn your province!

Danforth. Mr. Hale, have you preached in Andover this month?

Hale. Thank God they have no need for me in Andover.

Danforth. You baffle me, sir. Why have you returned here?

Hale. Why, it is all simple. I come to do the Devil's work. I come to counsel Christians they should belie themselves. [*His sarcasm collapses.*] There is blood on my head! Can you not see the blood on my head!!

Parris. Hush!

[*For he has heard footsteps. They all face the door. HERRICK enters with ELIZABETH. Her wrists are linked by a heavy chain, which HERRICK now removes. Her clothes are dirty; her face is pale and gaunt. HERRICK goes out.*]

Danforth. [*Very politely.*] Goody Proctor. [*She is silent.*] I hope you are hearty?

Elizabeth. [*As a warning reminder.*] I am yet six month before my time.

Danforth. Pray be at your ease, we come not for your life. We— [*Uncertain how to plead, for he is not accustomed to it.*] Mr. Hale, will you speak with the woman?

Hale. Goody Proctor, your husband is marked to hang this morning. [*Pause*]

Elizabeth. [*Quietly.*] I have heard it.

Hale. You know, do you not, that I have no connection with the court? [*She seems to doubt it.*] I come of my own, Goody Proctor. I would save your husband's life, for if he is taken I count myself his murderer. Do you understand me?

Elizabeth. What do you want of me?

Hale. Goody Proctor, I have gone this three month like our Lord into the wilderness. I have sought a Christian way, for damnation's doubled on a minister who counsels men to lie.

Hathorne. It is no lie, you cannot speak of lies.

Hale. It is a lie! They are innocent!

Danforth. I'll hear no more of that!

Hale. [*Continuing to ELIZABETH.*] Let you not mistake your duty as I mistook my own. I came into this village like a bridegroom to his beloved, bearing gifts of high religion; the very crowns of holy law I brought, and what I touched with my bright confidence, it died; and where I turned the eye of my great faith, blood flowed up. Beware, Goody Proctor—cleave to no faith when faith brings blood. It is mistaken law that leads you to sacrifice. Life, woman, life is God's most precious gift; no principle, however glorious, may justify the taking of it. I beg you, woman, prevail upon your husband to confess. Let him give his lie. Quail not before God's judgment in this,

for it may well be God damns a liar less than he that throws his life away for pride. Will you plead with him? I cannot think he will listen to another.

Elizabeth. [*Quietly.*] I think that be the Devil's argument.

Hale. [*With a climactic desperation.*] Woman, before the laws of God we are as swine! We cannot read His will!

Elizabeth. I cannot dispute with you, sir; I lack learning for it.

Danforth. [*Going to her.*] Goody Proctor, you are not summoned here for disputation. Be there no wifely tenderness within you? He will die with the sunrise. Your husband. Do you understand it? [*She only looks at him.*] What say you? Will you contend with him? [*She is silent.*] Are you stone? I tell you true, woman, had I no other proof of your unnatural life, your dry eyes now would be sufficient evidence that you delivered up your soul to Hell! A very ape would weep at such calamity! Have the devil dried up any tear of pity in you? [*She is silent.*] Take her out. It profit nothing she should speak to him!

Elizabeth. [*Quietly.*] Let me speak with him, Excellency.

Parris. [*With hope.*] You'll strive with him? [*She hesitates.*]

Danforth. Will you plead for his confession or will you not?

Elizabeth. I promise nothing. Let me speak with him.

[*A sound—the sibilance of dragging feet on stone. They turn. A pause. HERRICK enters with JOHN PROCTOR. His wrists are chained. He is another man, bearded, filthy, his eyes misty as though webs had overgrown them. He halts inside the doorway, his eye caught by the sight of ELIZABETH. The emotion flowing between them prevents anyone from speaking for an instant. Now HALE, visibly affected, goes to DANFORTH and speaks quietly.*]

Hale. Pray, leave them, Excellency.

Danforth. [*Pressing HALE impatiently aside.*] Mr. Proctor, you have been notified, have you not? [*PROCTOR is silent, staring at ELIZABETH.*] I see light in the sky, Mister; let you counsel with your wife, and may God help you turn your back on Hell.

[*PROCTOR is silent, staring at ELIZABETH.*]

Hale. [*Quietly.*] Excellency, let—

[*DANFORTH brushes past HALE and walks out. HALE follows. CHEEVER stands and follows, HATHORNE behind. HERRICK goes.*]

Parris. [From a safe distance, offers.] If you desire a cup of cider, Mr. Proctor, I am sure I— [PROCTOR turns an icy stare at him, and he breaks off. PARRIS raises his palms toward PROCTOR.] God lead you now.

[PARRIS goes out.]

[Alone. PROCTOR walks to her, halts. It is as though they stood in a spinning world. It is beyond sorrow, above it. He reaches out his hand as though toward an embodiment not quite real, and as he touches her, a strange soft sound, half laughter, half amazement, comes from his throat. He pats her hand. She covers his hand with hers. And then, weak, he sits. Then she sits, facing him.]

Proctor. The child?

Elizabeth. It grows.

Proctor. There is no word of the boys?

Elizabeth. They're well. Rebecca's Samuel keeps them.

Proctor. You have not seen them?

Elizabeth. I have not.

[She catches a weakening in herself and downs it.]

Proctor. You are a—marvel, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth. You—have been tortured?

Proctor. Aye. [Pause. She will not let herself be drowned in the sea that threatens her.] They come for my life now.

Elizabeth. I know it. [Pause.]

Proctor. None—have yet confessed?

Elizabeth. There be many confessed.

Proctor. Who are they?

Elizabeth. There be a hundred or more, they say. Goody Ballard is one; Isaiah Goodkind is one. There be many.

Proctor. Rebecca?

Elizabeth. Not Rebecca. She is one foot in Heaven now; naught may hurt her more.

Proctor. And Giles?

Elizabeth. You have not heard of it?

Proctor. I hear nothin', where I am kept.

Elizabeth. Giles is dead.

[He looks at her incredulously.]

Proctor. When were he hanged?

Elizabeth. [Quietly, factually.] He were not hanged. He would not answer aye or nay to his indictment; for if he denied the charge they'd hang him surely, and auction out his property. So he stand mute, and died Christian under the law. And so his sons will have his farm. It is the law, for he could not be condemned a wizard without he answer the indictment, aye or nay.

Proctor. Then how does he die?

Elizabeth. [Gently.] They press him, John.

Proctor. Press?

Elizabeth. Great stones they lay upon

his chest until he plead aye or nay. [With a tender smile for the old man.] They say he give them but two words. "More weight," he says. And died.

Proctor. [Numbed—a thread to weave into his agony.] "More weight."

Elizabeth. Aye. It were a fearsome man, Giles Corey. [Pause.]

Proctor. [With great force of will, but not quite looking at her.] I have been thinking I would confess to them, Elizabeth. [She shows nothing.] What say you? If I give them that?

Elizabeth. I cannot judge you, John.

[Pause.]

Proctor. [Simply—a pure question.] What would you have me do?

Elizabeth. As you will, I would have it.

[Slight pause.] I want you living, John. That's sure.

Proctor. [Pauses, then with a flailing of hope.] Giles' wife? Have she confessed?

Elizabeth. She will not. [Pause.]

Proctor. It is a pretense, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth. What is?

Proctor. I cannot mount the gibbet like a saint. It is a fraud. I am not that man. [She is silent.] My honesty is broke, Elizabeth; I am no good man. Nothing's spoiled by giving them this lie that were not rotten long before.

Elizabeth. And yet you've not confessed till now. That speak goodness in you.

Proctor. Spite only keeps me silent. It is hard to give a lie to dogs. [Pause, for the first time he turns directly to her.] I would have your forgiveness, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth. It is not for me to give, John, I am—

Proctor. I'd have you see some honesty in it. Let them that never lied die now to keep their souls. It is pretense for me, a vanity that will not blind God nor keep my children out of the wind. [Pause.] What say you?

Elizabeth. [Upon a heaving sob that always threatens.] John, it come to naught that I should forgive you, if you'll not forgive yourself. [Now he turns away a little, in great agony.] It is not my soul, John, it is yours. [He stands, as though in physical pain, slowly rising to his feet with a great immortal longing to find his answer. It is difficult to say, and she is on the verge of tears.] Only be sure of this, for I know it now: Whatever you will do, it is a good man does it. [He turns his doubting, searching gaze upon her.] I have read my heart this three month, John. [Pause.] I have sins of my own to count. It needs a cold wife to prompt lechery.

Proctor. [*In great pain.*] Enough, enough—

Elizabeth. [*Now pouring out her heart.*] Better you should know me!

Proctor. I will not hear it! I know you!

Elizabeth. You take my sins upon you, John—

Proctor. [*In agony.*] No, I take my own, my own!

Elizabeth. John, I counted myself so plain, so poorly made, no honest love could come to me! Suspicion kissed you when I did; I never knew how I should say my love. It were a cold house I kept!

[*In fright, she swerves, as HATHORNE enters.*]

Hathorne. What say you, Proctor? The sun is soon up.

[PROCTOR, his chest heaving, stares, turns to ELIZABETH. She comes to him as though to plead, her voice quaking.]

Elizabeth. Do what you will. But let none be your judge. There be no higher judge under Heaven than Proctor is! Forgive me, forgive me, John—I never knew such goodness in the world!

[*She covers her face, weeping.*]

[PROCTOR turns from her to HATHORNE; he is off the earth, his voice hollow.]

Proctor. I want my life.

Hathorne. [*Electrified, surprised.*] You'll confess yourself?

Proctor. I will have my life.

Hathorne. [*With a mystical tone.*] God be praised! It is a providence! [*He rushes out the door, and his voice is heard calling down the corridor.*] He will confess! Proctor will confess!

Proctor. [*With a cry, as he strides to the door.*] Why do you cry it? [*In great pain he turns back to her.*] It is evil, is it not? It is evil.

Elizabeth. [*In terror, weeping.*] I cannot judge you, John, I cannot!

Proctor. Then who will judge me? [*Suddenly clasping his hands.*] God in Heaven, what is John Proctor, what is John Proctor? [*He moves as an animal, and a fury is riding in him, a tantalized search.*] I think it is honest, I think so; I am no saint. [*As though she had denied this he calls angrily at her.*] Let Rebecca go like a saint; for me it is fraud!

[*Voices are heard in the hall, speaking together in suppressed excitement.*]

Elizabeth. I am not your judge, I cannot be. [*As though giving him release.*] Do as you will, do as you will!

Proctor. Would you give them such a lie? Say it. Would you ever give them this?

[*She cannot answer.*] You would not; if tongues of fire were singeing you you would not! It is evil. Good, then—it is evil, and I do it!

[HATHORNE enters with DANFORTH, and, with them, CHEEVER, PARRIS, and HALE. It is a businesslike, rapid entrance, as though the ice had been broken.]

Danforth. [*With great relief and gratitude.*] Praise to God, man, praise to God; you shall be blessed in Heaven for this. [*CHEEVER has hurried to the bench with pen, ink, and paper. PROCTOR watches him.*] Now then, let us have it. Are you ready, Mr. Cheever?

Proctor. [*With a cold, cold horror at their efficiency.*] Why must it be written?

Danforth. Why, for the good instruction of the village, Mister; this we shall post upon the church door! [*To PARRIS, urgently.*] Where is the marshal?

Parris. [*Runs to the door and calls down the corridor.*] Marshal! Hurry!

Danforth. Now, then, Mister, will you speak slowly, and directly to the point, for Mr. Cheever's sake. [*He is on record now, and is really dictating to CHEEVER, who writes.*] Mr. Proctor, have you seen the Devil in your life? [*PROCTOR'S jaws lock.*] Come man, there is light in the sky; the town waits at the scaffold; I would give out this news. Did you see the Devil?

Proctor. I did.

Parris. Praise God!

Danforth. And when he come to you, what were his demand? [*PROCTOR is silent. DANFORTH helps.*] Did he bid you to do his work upon the earth?

Proctor. He did.

Danforth. And you bound yourself to his service? [*DANFORTH turns, as REBECCA NURSE enters, with HERRICK helping to support her. She is barely able to walk.*] Come in, come in, woman!

Rebecca. [*Brightening as she sees PROCTOR.*] Ah, John! You are well, then, eh?

[PROCTOR turns his face to the wall.]

Danforth. Courage, man, courage—let her witness your good example that she may come to God herself. Now hear it, Goody Nurse! Say on, Mr. Proctor. Did you bind yourself to the Devil's service?

Rebecca. [*Astonished.*] Why, John!

Proctor. [*Through his teeth, his face turned from REBECCA.*] I did.

Danforth. Now, woman, you surely see it profit nothin' to keep this conspiracy any further. Will you confess yourself with him?

Rebecca. Oh, John—God send his mercy on you!

Danforth. I say, will you confess yourself, Goody Nurse?

Rebecca. Why, it is a lie, it is a lie; how may I damn myself? I cannot, I cannot.

Danforth. Mr. Proctor. When the Devil came to you did you see Rebecca Nurse in his company? [*PROCTOR is silent.*] Come, man, take courage—did you ever see her with the Devil?

Proctor. [*Almost inaudibly.*] No.

[*DANFORTH, now sensing trouble, glances at JOHN and goes to the table, and picks up a sheet—the list of condemned.*]

Danforth. Did you ever see her sister, Mary Easty, with the Devil?

Proctor. No, I did not.

Danforth. [*His eyes narrow on PROCTOR.*] Did you ever see Martha Corey with the Devil?

Proctor. I did not.

Danforth. [*Realizing, slowly putting the sheet down.*] Did you ever see anyone with the Devil?

Proctor. I did not.

Danforth. Proctor, you mistake me. I am not empowered to trade your life for a lie. You have most certainly seen some person with the Devil. [*PROCTOR is silent.*] Mr. Proctor, a score of people have already testified they saw this woman with the Devil.

Proctor. Then it is proved. Why must I say it?

Danforth. Why "must" you say it! Why, you should rejoice to say it if your soul is truly purged of any love for Hell!

Proctor. They think to go like saints. I like not to spoil their names.

Danforth. [*Inquiring, incredulous.*] Mr. Proctor, do you think they go like saints?

Proctor. [*Evading.*] This woman never thought she done the Devil's work.

Danforth. Look you, sir. I think you mistake your duty here. It matters nothing what she thought—she is convicted of the unnatural murder of children, and you for sending your spirit out upon Mary Warren. Your soul alone is the issue here, Mister, and you will prove its whiteness or you cannot live in a Christian country. Will you tell me now what persons conspired with you in the Devil's company? [*PROCTOR is silent.*] To your knowledge was Rebecca Nurse ever—

Proctor. I speak my own sins; I cannot judge another. [*Crying out, with hatred.*] I have no tongue for it.

Hale. [*Quickly to DANFORTH.*] Excellency, it is enough he confess himself. Let him sign it, let him sign it.

Parris. [*Feverishly.*] It is a great service, sir. It is a weighty name; it will strike the village that Proctor confess. I beg you, let him sign it. The sun is up, Excellency!

Danforth. [*Considers; then with dissatisfaction.*] Come, then, sign your testimony. [*To CHEEVER.*] Give it to him. [*CHEEVER goes to PROCTOR, the confession and a pen in hand. PROCTOR does not look at it.*] Come, man, sign it.

Proctor. [*After glancing at the confession.*] You have all witnessed it—it is enough.

Danforth. You will not sign it?

Proctor. You have all witnessed it; what more is needed?

Danforth. Do you sport with me? You will sign your name or it is no confession, Mister!

[*His breast heaving with agonized breathing, PROCTOR now lays the paper down and signs his name.*]

Parris. Praise be to the Lord!

[*PROCTOR has just finished signing when DANFORTH reaches for the paper. But PROCTOR snatches it up, and now a wild terror is rising in him, and a boundless anger.*]

Danforth. [*Perplexed, but politely extending his hand.*] If you please, sir.

Proctor. No.

Danforth. [*As though PROCTOR did not understand.*] Mr. Proctor, I must have—

Proctor. No, no. I have signed it. You have seen me. It is done! You have no need for this.

Parris. Proctor, the village must have proof that—

Proctor. Damn the village! I confess to God, and God has seen my name on this! It is enough!

Danforth. No, sir, it is—

Proctor. You came to save my soul, did you not? Here! I have confessed myself; it is enough!

Danforth. You have not con—

Proctor. I have confessed myself! Is there no good penitence but it be public? God does not need my name nailed upon the church! God sees my name; God knows how black my sins are! It is enough!

Danforth. Mr. Proctor—

Proctor. You will not use me! I am no Sarah Good or Tituba, I am John Proctor! You will not use me! It is no part of salvation that you should use me!

Danforth. I do not wish to—

Proctor. I have three children—how may I teach them to walk like men in the world, and I sold my friends?

Danforth. You have not sold your friends—

Proctor. Beguile me not! I blacken all of them when this is nailed to the church the very day they hang for silence!

Danforth. Mr. Proctor, I must have good and legal proof that you—

Proctor. You are the high court, your word is good enough! Tell them I confessed myself; say Proctor broke his knees and wept like a woman; say what you will, but my name cannot—

Danforth. [*With suspicion.*] It is the same, is it not? If I report it or you sign to it?

Proctor. [*He knows it is insane.*] No, it is not the same! What others say and what I sign to is not the same!

Danforth. Why? Do you mean to deny this confession when you are free?

Proctor. I mean to deny nothing!

Danforth. Then explain to me, Mr. Proctor, why you will not let—

Proctor. [*With a cry of his whole soul.*] Because it is my name! Because I cannot have another in my life! Because I lie and sign myself to lies! Because I am not worth the dust on the feet of them that hang! How may I live without my name? I have given you my soul; leave me my name!

Danforth. [*Pointing at the confession in PROCTOR'S hand.*] Is that document a lie? If it is a lie I will not accept it! What say you? I will not deal in lies, Mister! [*PROCTOR is motionless.*] You will give me your honest confession in my hand, or I cannot keep you from the rope. [*PROCTOR does not reply.*] Which way do you go, Mister?

[*His breast heaving, his eyes staring, PROCTOR tears the paper and crumples it, and he is weeping in fury, but erect.*]

Danforth. Marshal!

Parris. [*Hysterically, as though the tearing paper were his life.*] Proctor, Proctor!

Hale. Man, you will hang! You cannot!

Proctor. [*His eyes full of tears.*] I can. And there's your first marvel, that I can. You have made your magic now, for now I do think I see some shred of goodness in John Proctor. Not enough to weave a banner

with, but white enough to keep it from such dogs. [*ELIZABETH, in a burst of terror, rushes to him and weeps against his hand.*] Give them no tear! Tears pleasure them! Show honor now, show a stony heart and sink them with it!

[*He has lifted her, and kisses her now with great passion.*]

Rebecca. Let you fear nothing! Another judgment waits us all!

Danforth. Hang them high over the town! Who weeps for these, weeps for corruption!

[*He sweeps out past them. HERRICK starts to lead REBECCA, who almost collapses, but PROCTOR catches her, and she glances up at him apologetically.*]

Rebecca. I've had no breakfast.

Herrick. Come, man.

[*HERRICK escorts them out, HATHORNE and CHEEVER behind them. ELIZABETH stands staring at the empty doorway.*]

Parris. [*In deadly fear, to ELIZABETH.*] Go to him, Goody Proctor! There is yet time!

[*From outside a drumroll strikes the air. PARRIS is startled. ELIZABETH jerks about toward the window.*]

Parris. Go to him! [*He rushes out the door, as though to hold back his fate.*] Proctor! Proctor!

[*Again, a short burst of drums.*]

Hale. Woman, plead with him! [*He starts to rush out the door, and then goes back to her.*] Woman! It is pride, it is vanity. [*She avoids his eyes, and moves to the window. He drops to his knees.*] Be his helper!—What profit him to bleed? Shall the dust praise him? Shall the worms declare his truth? Go to him, take his shame away!

Elizabeth. [*Supporting herself against collapse, grips the bars of the window, and with a cry.*] He have his goodness now. God forbid I take it from him!

[*The final drumroll crashes, then heightens violently. HALE weeps in frantic prayer, and the new sun is pouring in upon her face, and the drums rattle like bones in the morning air.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ECHOES DOWN THE CORRIDOR

Not long after the fever died, Parris was voted from office, walked out on the high-road, and was never heard of again.

The legend has it that Abigail turned up later as a prostitute in Boston.

Twenty years after the last execution, the government awarded compensation to the victims still living, and to the families of the dead. However, it is evident that some people still were unwilling to admit their total

guilt, and also that the factionalism was still alive, for some beneficiaries were actually not victims at all, but informers.

Elizabeth Proctor married again, four years after Proctor's death.

In solemn meeting, the congregation rescinded the excommunications—this in March 1712. But they did so upon orders of the government. The jury, however, wrote a statement praying forgiveness of all who had suffered.

Certain farms which had belonged to the victims were left to ruin, and for more than a century no one would buy them or live on them.

To all intents and purposes, the power of theocracy in Massachusetts was broken.

LOOK HOMEWARD, ANGEL*

By

KETTI FRINGS

A Play Based on the Novel by Thomas Wolfe

"HE ALWAYS HAD SO MANY WORDS left over from everything," wrote Mrs. Frings, recalling the difficulty of reducing Thomas Wolfe's proverbial eloquence as novelist to the crisp expression essential to a play. That she succeeded phenomenally in this respect, and even more tellingly in the selection of dramatically apt phrasing, was proven by popular acclaim, rave notices, and the Pulitzer and Dramatic Critics' Circle awards in 1958.

In fairness to the genius of this admittedly great American novelist, the first and most significant of whose fictionalized autobiographical works is *Look Homeward, Angel*, the dramatizer would admit, we may be sure, that Wolfe's novel afforded her not only the plot, but, more impressively, the power and fascination of its stage success. In admiration and devotion she had assumed the task that no one since its publication in 1930 had dared to attempt: that of disentangling a dramatic sequence from Wolfe's enchanting jungle of life and golden words, which, as a critic once wrote, "sometimes swamped Wolfe's plots," even in the novels.

In his student days he had been eager to be a dramatist, enrolling under the foremost university teachers of playwriting, Frederick Koch of North Carolina and George Pierce Baker of Harvard. But his stubborn indulgence in florid diction and his scorn for the conventional patterns of playmaking blocked his way to the stage. He wrote to Professor Baker, "I shall never express myself dramatically," and abandoned Baker's 47 Workshop for the career of university instructor. He did, however, rework his last student play, "Welcome to Our City," and offered it to the Neighborhood Playhouse and the New York Theatre Guild. It was declined by the Playhouse but was seriously considered by the Guild; but when cutting and other improvements were insisted on,

Wolfe characteristically refused to cooperate and gave up all hope of theatre success.

Years later, when applying for a Guggenheim fellowship for the completion of his novel, he could still write: "I loved the theatre, but I began to see I had to find a medium where I could satisfy my desire for fullness, intensity, and completeness." Clearly he was unwilling to renounce his instinctive "aim of free expression," or submit to "a hundred different people" of the stage demanding abbreviation. Resentment and petulance and Wolfe's supreme confidence in a self-directing genius also played a part.

Obviously Wolfe lacked and boldly denied the essentials of stage success: the talent to express a play's message by suggestion through action and dialogue, as Professor Baker tried to teach his hopefuls, rather than by explicitly descriptive dialogue. Wolfe's innate urge was the reverse—minutely to analyze and describe, now in blunt, now in poetic diction of great variety and beauty, as in the passage Mrs. Frings includes for Eugene to speak, beginning: "Even a cold one, standing in a station yard. . . ."

During his teaching career, Wolfe lost no opportunity to wander through Europe on meager savings, crystalizing his thoughts on the contrasting cultures of Europe and America. Travel increased his determination to reveal in novels his own experience as a searcher of the American mind. In 1928 he mentioned "twenty months" spent on his first, *O, Lost*, later to be known as *Look Homeward, Angel*. It had been begun in London and continued in New York. In both cities he had worked with great intensity and with a minimum of sensual indulgence so often linked with his name. He filled endless pages with notes greatly in excess of the resulting novel. But in 1930, thanks largely to the appreciative and sympathetic guidance of Scribner's editor, Maxwell Perkins, "swamping" words were reduced to 626 pages in the published form.

* Reprinted by permission of Edward C. Aswell and Ketti Frings.

To appreciate fully Mrs. Frings' technique, which Wolfe could not or would not have applied, one should read at least the last third of the novel, which, after strict elimination of characters and condensing of episodes, provided the scenario for the stage version. This ends with Eugene's (Wolfe's own) escape to the university at Chapel Hill from the vexations and family constraints of Altamount (Asheville)—the friction which, in the novel, extends much further. The escape is to mental liberty that is central in Wolfe's vague notion of a new American "myth" to replace the American dream of liberty, which was not liberating enough to satisfy a pathmaker in thought such as the youthful Wolfe believed himself to be. In a letter written in submitting *Mannerhouse*, a play begun at Harvard and later revised in vain for production in New York, Wolfe wrote that it had become "a mould for the expression of my secret life, of my own dark faith. . . . My play tries to express my passionate belief in all myth, in the necessity of defending and living not for truth—but for divine falsehood." In his *Story of a Novel* he declared: ". . . in the cultures of Europe and of the Orient the [American] artist can find no antecedent scheme . . . no body of tradition that can give his work the validity of truth. . . . he must make somehow a new tradition for himself, derived from his own life and from the enormous space and energy of American life." Such vague groping towards a traditional "myth" in the making underlies *Look Homeward, Angel* and the two subsequent novels, *Time and the River* and *The Web and the Rock*. Luckily it does not obtrude upon the vividly realistic persons and events of the story, but is merely the author's source of inspiration and epic intention, as apparent in this play as it is in O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*, a drama that also dissects biographically a discordant family held together by deeply buried but very real ties of affection and aspiration.

Symbolized in the title, Wolfe's structural design—which he called the "outward movement," or the characters' urge to escape, contrasted with a "downward movement" into the deteriorating family experience—is made dramatically poignant by Mrs. Frings in two scenes of the play that are largely her own invention: the meeting of the family group in W. O.'s shop presided over by the smiling Carrara angel, symbol of unattainable beauty and kindness, and the scene at brother Ben's deathbed. In the

former, the outward movement, described by Wolfe as "the effort for release, freedom, and loneliness," is brought to a climax in a *coup de théâtre* as Eliza tears up the bank check; and the downward movement, defined as "constant excavation into the buried life of a group of people" describing "the cyclic curve of a family's life—genesis, union, decay, and dissolution," reaches the depths. At Ben's bedside in the novel "movements" are more tragically defined, relieved by the indestructible bonds of family love.

In these passages and elsewhere Mrs. Frings has heightened the theatre values by a discerning selection of memorable bits of Wolfe's dialogue, as when Eugene's stammered prayer, only incidental in the novel, gains lingering beauty as the curtain falls upon Act II.

The brutal frankness with which the characters berate each other in this artistically depicted way of life—Wolfe's own—makes vigorous theatre as Mrs. Frings shrewdly adapts it to stage effect. Even Laura's deception of her cub lover—a kind of parody of the conventional love motive that centers most fiction and drama—refreshingly robs the book and play of sentimental unreality and heightens the meaning of Eugene's existential seeking of "release, freedom, and loneliness." Nevertheless, we must read with astonishment the very sincere "Note to the Publisher's Reader" that Wolfe submitted with his manuscript to Scribner's and other publishers. It reveals a strength of feeling hardly suspected as one reads the book or play. "To me who was joined so passionately with the people of this book, it seemed that they were the greatest people that I have ever known and the texture of their lives, the richest and strangest . . . If I could get my magnificent people on paper as they were . . . I believe no one would object to my 250,000 words." In her play version Mrs. Frings greatly helped to make these "magnificent" and strange people appear as Wolfe intended. To the same end the faultless acting of Jo Van Fleet as Eliza and Anthony Perkins as Eugene was outstanding in an exceptional cast. Similarly the symbolic but practical and realistic settings of designer Jo Mielziner were planned to underline the meaning of the play and to make effective Mrs. Frings' carefully visualized stage action, the complexity of which at the beginning of the play is not easy for a casual reader to follow, but which becomes perfectly lucid exposition to all who see it in the theatre.

KETTI (HARTLEY) FRINGS

Born 1916, Columbus, Ohio. Katharine Hartley.
 Attended Principia College, St. Louis, Mo., for one year.
 Free-lance writer of advertising matter and screen plays.
 1938, Married Kurt Frings. Adopted name Ketti.
 Lives in Southern California. Two children.

PLAYS

1942 *Mr. Sycamore*. 1957 *Look Homeward, Angel*. You. 1952 *Come Back, Little Sheba*. 1955 *The Shrike*.

SCREENWRITING

1941 *Hold Back the Dawn*. 1944 *God's Front Porch*. 1947 *Let the Devil Catch* "O Lost! At Midnight," *Theatre Arts*, XLII (February 1958), 30 ff.

WRITINGS ON DRAMA

THOMAS WOLFE

Born 1900, Asheville, North Carolina; son of William Oliver Wolfe.

1920, A.B., University of North Carolina.

1920-1923, Graduate student at Harvard University. A.M., 1922, with distinction. Enrolled in Professor George Pierce Baker's playwriting course (47 Workshop).

1924-1930, Instructor of English at Washington Square College of New York University, broken by interruptions for European tours, and longer intervals after 1928 for travel and writing.

1930, *Look Homeward, Angel* published with immediate popular and critical success. Prolific writer of letters, short stories, and endless notes on life and travel, from which plays and novels, after much editing, were evolved.

Died 1938.

PLAYS

1924 *The Return of Buck Gavin* published, written earlier at U. of N.C. 1942 *Gentlemen of the Press*. 1948 *Mannerhouse* published, written 1923-24.

(Among other plays written in course, *Niggertown*, later named *Welcome to Our City*, seriously considered for production by the New York Theatre Guild, but withdrawn by the author.)

LOOK HOMEWARD, ANGEL

PLACE AND TIME: *The Town of Altamont, North Carolina, in the fall of the year nineteen hundred and sixteen.*

ACT ONE

SCENE I

The Dixieland Boarding House is a flimsily constructed frame house of fifteen drafty, various-sized rooms. It has a gabled, unplanned and rambling appearance, and is painted a dirty yellow. Most of its furniture is badly worn and out of style. The beds are chipped enamel-covered iron. There are accordion hat trees, cracked mirrors, an occasional plant. On the typically southern veranda which embraces the front and one side of the house, there are chairs, rockers, and a wood box. There is a sign above the door, electrically lighted at night: Dixieland—Rooms and Board. In the center of the house, slightly raised, is a turntable on which all the bedroom scenes are played. At the back of the house a walk approaches the rear of the veranda. There is a side door and near it a circular yard seat. Also down front is a table and a chair.

The street itself has a feeling of great trees hanging over it. Occasionally during the play, the stillness is broken by the rustle of autumn leaves, and the poignant wail of a train whistle.

The curtain rises in darkness.

[After a moment we hear EUGENE'S voice coming from his room. Seated, his back to the audience, he is only partially glimpsed, writing, surrounded by books.]

Eugene. [Reading.] "BEN, by Eugene Gant. . . .

My brother Ben's face is like a piece of slightly yellow ivory . . .

[Lights come up on the veranda where BEN GANT, 30, delicate and sensitive, the most refined of the Gants, and forever a stranger among them, is seated on the front steps reading a newspaper. He is sometimes scowling and surly, but

he is the hero protector of those he loves, with quiet authority and a passion for home which is fundamental. At times he speaks to the side over his shoulder, in a peculiar mannerism of speech, as though he were addressing a familiar unseen presence.]

Eugene. His high, white forehead is knotted fiercely by an old man's scowl. His mouth is like a knife.

His smile the flicker of light across the blade.

His face is like a blade, and a knife, and a flicker of light.

And when he fastens his hard white fingers

And his scowling eyes upon a thing he wants to fix,

He sniffs with sharp and private concentration.

[Lights reveal MARIE "FATTY" PERT, 43, seated near BEN in her rocker. She is a generous, somewhat boozy woman, knitting a pair of men's socks and tenderly regarding BEN.]

Thus women looking, feel a well of tenderness

For his pointed, bumpy, always scowling face. . . ."

[EUGENE continues writing.]

Ben. Somebody's got to drive the Huns from the skies. Poor old England can't be expected to do it alone.

Mrs. Pert. It's their mess, isn't it?

Ben. It says here there's an American flying corps forming in Canada.

Mrs. Pert. Ben Gant, what are you thinking of?

Ben. All my life in this one little burg, Fatty! Besides getting away, I'd be doing my bit.

Mrs. Pert. Would they take you so old?

Ben. This article says eighteen to thirty-two.

Mrs. Pert. Aren't the physical standards pretty high?

Ben. Listen to her! I'm in good condition!

Mrs. Pert. You're twenty pounds underweight! I never saw anyone like you for not eating.

Ben. Maguire gave me a thorough checkup this spring!

Mrs. Pert. How would your family feel, if you went?

Ben. What family? The batty boarders? Apologies, Fatty. I never associate you with them. Except for Gene, nobody'd know I was gone. [*Looks up, dreamily.*] To fly up there in the wonderful world of the sky. Up with the angels.

[HELEN GANT BARTON and her husband HUGH enter from the house. HELEN is gaunt, raw-boned, in her middle twenties, often nervous, intense, irritable, and abusive, though basically generous, the hysteria of excitement constantly lurking in her. It is a spiritual and physical necessity for her to exhaust herself in service to others, though her grievances, especially in her service to her mother, are many.]

HUGH is a cash register salesman, simple, sweet, extremely warmhearted. He carries a tray with a coffee pot and cups and saucers which HELEN helps him set on a table. They have been arguing.]

Hugh. We should never have agreed to live here for one day—that's the answer. You work yourself to the bone—for what?

Helen. Mrs. Pert, the other boarders have almost finished dinner!

Mrs. Pert. What's the dessert, Helen?

Helen. Charlotte Russe.

Hugh. They're like children with a tape worm.

Ben. Fatty, I told you you'd better get in there!

Mrs. Pert. I was trying to do without, but I'm afraid that calls me. See you later, Ben.

[*She leaves her knitting on the chair, exits inside.*]

Helen. Ben, where is Mama?

Ben. How should I know?

Helen. I've had to serve the entire dinner alone!

Hugh. Look at me, holes in my socks, a trouser button missing—and before I married you I had the reputation of being dapper.

Helen. I bet she's off somewhere with Uncle Will, and I'm left in the kitchen to slave for a crowd of old cheap boarders! That's her tactic!

Hugh. "Dapper Hugh Barton"—it said so in the newspaper when we were married.

Helen. [*To BEN, who pays no attention.*] You know that, don't you, don't you? And do I ever hear her say a word of thanks? Do I get—do I get as much as a go-to-hell for it? No. "Why, pshaw, child," she'll say, "I work more than anybody!" And most time, damn her, she does.

Boarders. [*Off stage, calling, ringing the service bell.*] Helen. Helen!

Helen. You come in, Hugh, and help me!

[*HELEN exits into the house.*]

Ben. How are the cash registers selling, Hugh?

Hugh. Putting the cigar box out of business. I got a good order in Raleigh last week. I've already put away nine hundred dollars toward our own little house.

Ben. You ought to have one, Hugh. You and Helen.

Hugh. [*Looking at part of the newspaper.*] I guess they don't have to advertise the good jobs, do they? The really big jobs . . . they wouldn't be here in the newspaper, would they?

Ben. Why?

Hugh. If there was something good here in town . . . not on the road so much . . . maybe then I could talk Helen into moving away. Ben, you hear things around the paper—

Helen. [*Off.*] Hugh! Hugh!

Ben. I'll keep my ears open, Hugh.

Hugh. Well, I guess I don't want to make Helen any madder at me. Thanks, Ben.

[*Exits inside. An automobile is heard off, driving up, stopping. BEN moves down to the yard seat, reads his newspaper. The car door slams.*]

Eliza. [*Off.*] I'll vow I never saw such a man. What little we have got, I've had to fight for tooth and nail, tooth and nail!

[*ELIZA GANT enters with WILL PENTLAND, her brother. ELIZA, 57, is of Scotch descent, with all the acquisitiveness and fancied premonitions of the Scotch. She is mercurial, with dauntless energy, greed, and love. She has an odd way of talking, pursing her lips, and she characteristically uses her right hand in a point-making gesture, fist enclosed, forefinger extended. These mannerisms are often imitated by those who hate and love her. ELIZA is carrying some fall leaves and a real-estate circular. WILL is punchy, successful, secure, a real-estate broker. They do not notice BEN.*]

Eliza. Like the fellow says, there's no fool like an old fool! Of course Mr. Gant's been a fool all his life. Pshaw! If I hadn't

kept after him all these years we wouldn't have a stick to call our own.

Will. You had to have an artistic husband.

Eliza. Artistic. I have my opinion about that. Why, Will, the money that man squanders every year on liquor alone would buy all kinds of good downtown property, to say nothing of paying off this place. We could be well-to-do people now if we'd started at the very beginning.

Will. You've given him every opportunity.

Eliza. He always hated the idea of owning anything—couldn't bear it, he told me once—'cause of some bad trade he made when he was a young man up in Pennsylvania. If I'd been in the picture then, you can bet your bottom dollar there'd been no loss.

Will. [Chuckling.] Or the loss'd been on the other side.

Eliza. That's a good one! You know us Pentlands! Well, I'm going to get after Mr. Gant right today about that bank offer.

Will. Let me know when you've warmed him up enough for me to talk to him.

Eliza. It'll take a good deal of warming up, I can tell you. He's so blamed stubborn about that precious old marble yard, but I'll do it!

Will. Give me a jingle when you want to look at that farm property. I'll drive you out there.

Eliza. Thanks, Will! I appreciate it. [WILL exits. ELIZA starts into the house, sees BEN.] Ben! What are you doing home at this hour?

Ben. I'm working afternoons this week.

Eliza. Oh. [Somewhat worriedly.] Will you get dinner downtown?

Ben. I usually do.

Eliza. You always sound so short with me, Ben. Why is that? You don't even look at me. You know I can't stand not being looked at by the person I'm talking to. Don't you feel well?

Ben. I feel good.

[A train whistle is heard in the distance.]

Eliza. Oh. Pshaw, there's the midday train now! Has Eugene gone to the station?

Ben. How should I know?

Eliza. [Calling up to EUGENE's room.] Eugene, are you up in your room? Eugene? [EUGENE GANT, hearing his mother's voice, rises from his chair, turns toward the window, but he doesn't answer, and ELIZA does not see him. EUGENE is 17, the youngest of the GANTS, tall, awkward, with a craving for

knowledge and love. During the following he leaves his room.] Eugene! I'll vow, that boy. Just when I need him. . . . [Notices MRS. PERT's knitting.] Ben, I hope you haven't been lying around here wasting time with that Mrs. Pert again?

Ben. Listen to her! It's the nicest time I spend.

Eliza. I tell you what: it doesn't look right, Ben. What must the other boarders think? A woman her age . . . a drinking woman . . . married. Can't you find someone young and pretty and free to be with? I don't understand it. You're the best looking boy I've got.

Ben. [More pleasantly.] If it'll make you feel better, Mama, I'll look around.

[Relieved by the change in his mood, ELIZA smiles. She also notices the sprawled newspaper.]

Eliza. That's Mr. Clatt's newspaper. You know he's finicky about reading it first. Fold it up before you go.

[During the above, EUGENE is seen coming down the stairs from his room. Now limping slightly, he starts to sneak out the side door, but ELIZA spots him.]

Eliza. Eugene, where are you sneaking to? Come out here.

Eugene. [Comes out.] Yes, Mama?

Eliza. The train's just coming in. Now you hurry over to that depot.

Eugene. Today? I did it yesterday.

Eliza. Every day until every room is filled. The advertising cards are on the hall table. Go get them. [EUGENE, disgruntled, goes into the entry hall to get the cards from a small stand. ELIZA strips some dead leaves off a plant.] I declare, seventeen is an impossible age. I don't know why he complains. He hasn't anything else to do. Spending his time up there scribbling, dreaming.

Ben. The other boarding houses send their porters to the trains.

Eliza. Never you mind, Ben Gant, you used to do it. It's little enough I've ever asked of you boys. [To EUGENE as he comes from the hall.] Have you got the cards?

Eugene. In my pocket.

Eliza. [Holding out her hand.] Let me see them. Let me see them!

Eugene. [Takes cards from pocket, reads.] "Stay at Dixieland, Altamont's Homiest Boarding House."—It should be homeliest.

Eliza. Eugene!

Eugene. I hate drumming up trade! It's deceptive and it's begging.

Eliza. Oh my . . . my! Dreamer Eugene

Gant, what do you think the world is all about? We are all . . . all of us . . . selling something. Now you get over to the depot right this minute. And for heaven's sake, boy, spruce up, shoulders back! Look like you are somebody! [EUGENE starts off.] And smile! Look pleasant!

[EUGENE grins, maniacally.]

Ben. [Suddenly, as he watches EUGENE limping.] Gene! What are you walking like that for?

Eugene. Like what?

Ben. [Rises.] What are you limping for? My God, those are my shoes you've got on! I threw them out yesterday!

Eliza. They're practically brand new.

Ben. They're too small for me; they must be killing him.

Eugene. Ben, please!

Eliza. Maybe you can afford to throw out brand new shoes.

Ben. Mama, for God's sake, you ask him to walk straight, how can he? His toes must be like pretzels!

Eugene. They're all right. I'll get used to them.

Ben. [Throwing down his paper.] My God, it's a damned disgrace, sending him out on the streets like a hired man . . . Gene should be on that train, going to college!

Eliza. That's enough—that's just enough of that! You haven't a family to provide for like I have, Ben Gant. Now I don't want to hear another word about it! Gene will go to college when we can afford it. This year he can help his Papa at the shop.

Ben. I thought you were going to warm up Papa, so he'll sell the shop.

Eliza. Ben Gant, that wasn't intended for your ears. I'd appreciate it if you wouldn't mention it to Mr. Gant until I have. Hurry off now, son, get us a customer!

Eugene. Why should Papa sell his shop?

Eliza. Now you're too young to worry about my business. You tend to yours.

Eugene. What business do I have to attend to, Mama?

Eliza. Well, get busy, get busy! Help your Papa at the shop.

Eugene. I don't want to be a stonecutter.

Eliza. Well, go back to delivering newspapers. Work for Uncle Will in his real-estate office. But keep the ball rolling, child. Now hurry on or you'll be late!

[EUGENE exits.]

Helen. [Entering.] Mama, dinner's practically over! I'm no slave!

Eliza. I'll be right in, Helen. [HELEN exits, slamming door. ELIZA sighs. For a

moment, left alone with BEN, she becomes herself, a deeply troubled woman.] What's the matter with him, Ben? What's wrong with that boy? What's the matter with all of you? I certainly don't know. I tell you what, sometimes I get frightened. Seems as if every one of you's at the end of something, dissatisfied, and wants something else. But it just can't be. A house divided against itself cannot stand. I'll vow, I don't know what we're all coming to. [Approaches side door, pauses.] If you like, this once, as long as you're home, why don't you eat here? I'm sure there's plenty left over.

BEN. No, thank you, Mama.

[He starts off.]

Eliza. A good hot meal!

Ben. I've got to get over there.

Eliza. Ben, are you sure you feel all right?

Ben. I feel fine.

Eliza. Well, have a nice day at the paper, son.

[BEN exits. ELIZA looks after him, then hearing the voices of the boarders, exits into the house by the side door. The boarders, ushered by HELEN, enter through the front door. They are:

JAKE CLATT, 30, an insensitive boor; MRS. CLATT, 60, Jake's mother, with a coarse smile and dyed hair; she is deaf and carries a cane; FLORRY MANGLE, 29, wistful, humorless, interested in Jake; MRS. SNOWDEN, 50, quiet, unobtrusive, lonely; MISS BROWN, 36, prim on the surface, but with the marks of the amateur prostitute; MR. FARREL, 60, a retired dancing master, new to DIXIE-LAND.]

Mrs. Clatt. I ate too much again.

Helen. [Loudly to MRS. CLATT.] Help yourself to coffee, please, Mrs. Clatt. I'm short-handed today.

Mrs. Clatt. [Brandishing her cane at MR. FARREL, who is about to sit.] Not there, that's my chair! That one's free, since the school teacher left.

Miss Brown. You're a teacher too, aren't you, Mr. Farrel?

Mr. Farrel. Of the dance. Retired.

Miss Brown. I hope you'll stay with us for a while. Where are you from?

Mr. Farrel. Tampa.

Miss Brown. Do you know the Castle Walk, Mr. Farrel? I'd love to learn it!

[They stroll down to the yard seat.]

Mrs. Clatt. I don't know what Mrs. Gant makes this coffee of. There isn't a bean invented tastes like this.

Jake. Couldn't you make it for us sometime, Helen?

Helen. My mother always makes the coffee here.

[*HUGH and MRS. PERT enter. The others seat themselves.*]

Mrs. Pert. That was scrumptious dessert, but oh dear! [*Sits in her rocker.*]

Jake. Yes, it was good, if only the servings were bigger.

Mrs. Clatt. I'm told the best boarding house food in town is down the street at Mrs. Haskell's.

Jake. That's right, mother. That's what I heard.

Hugh. Then move in to Mrs. Haskell's!

Helen. [*With a shove.*] Hugh!

[*She exits.*]

Miss Mangle. I spent one season there, but I prefer it here. It's more informal and entertaining.

Jake. Not lately. It's been over a month since Mrs. Gant had to have Mr. Molasses Edwards and his two Dixie Ramblers evicted for not paying their rent. She certainly loves to see the police swarm around!

[*LAURA JAMES, 23, carrying a suitcase and a DIXIELAND advertising card, enters. She is attractive, but not beautiful. She advances to the steps.*]

Miss Mangle. Don't you?

Jake. I like excitement—why shouldn't I?

Miss Mangle. Other people's excitement. Don't you ever want excitement of your own? I do.

[*MRS. CLATT sees LAURA, nudges her son into attention.*]

Laura. Good afternoon!

Hugh. [*Crosses to her.*] Good afternoon!

Laura. Is the proprietor here?

Hugh. I'll call her. [*Calls inside.*] Mrs. Gant! Customer! [*To LAURA.*] Please come right up.

Jake. [*Leaping to LAURA.*] Here, let me take that suitcase. It must be heavy for you.

Laura. Thank you.

[*JAKE takes LAURA's suitcase. The other boarders look her over, whisper. ELIZA, wearing an apron, places the leaves in a vase on the hall table, enters. At first raking glance she doubts that LAURA, so young and different, is a true prospect.*]

Eliza. Yes?

Laura. Are you the proprietor?

Eliza. Mrs. Eliza Gant—that's right.

Laura. I found this card on the sidewalk.

Eliza. [*Takes card.*] On the sidewalk! And you're looking for a room?

Laura. If you have one for me.

Eliza. Of course I have, dear—a nice quiet

room. You just sit down here and have yourself a cup of my good coffee, while I go and open it up, so I can show it to you. Hugh, you take care of the young lady. This is Mr. Barton, my son-in-law.

Laura. How do you do, Mr. Barton? I'm Laura James.

Eliza. Laura—why that's a good Scotch name. Are you Scotch?

Laura. On one side.

Eliza. Pshaw! I could have told you were Scotch the minute I laid eyes on you. I'm Scotch too. Well, isn't that nice? [*Makes introductions.*] Miss James, Mr. Clatt. . . . [*Each acknowledges the introduction according to his personality.*] . . . his mother, Mrs. Clatt, Mrs. Snowden, Miss Mangle, Mr. Farrel, [*Disapprovingly notices MISS BROWN with MR. FARREL.*] . . . Miss Brown . . . Miss Brown! And Mrs. Pert. Where do you come from, dear?

Laura. I live in Richmond.

[*MISS BROWN and MR. FARREL exit, practicing the Castle Walk, eventually reappear at the rear of the veranda.*]

Eliza. Richmond! Now that's a pleasant city—but hot! Not like it is here, cool and refreshing in these hills. You haven't come to Altamont for a cure, have you dear?

Laura. I'm healthy, if that's what you mean. But I've been working hard and I need a rest.

[*HUGH approaches with coffee.*]

Eliza. Here's your coffee.

Laura. [*Takes coffee.*] Thank you, Mr. Barton. What are your rates, Mrs. Gant?

Eugene. [*Off.*] Mama! Mama!

[*EUGENE runs up the back walk, around the veranda.*]

Eliza. Suppose I show you the room first.

Eugene. Mama!

Eliza. I declare, that child either crawls like a snail or speeds like a fire engine. . . .

Eugene. [*Pulls ELIZA away from the others.*] Can I speak to you, Mama?

Eliza. I don't see you limping now, when you're not trying to get sympathy. Don't think I don't know your little tricks to. . . .

Eugene. [*Urgently.*] Mama, Papa's been at Laughran's again. Doctor Maguire is trying to steer him home now.

Eliza. [*Momentarily stabbed.*] The doctor? Is he sick or is he drunk?

Eugene. He's rip-roaring! He's awful. He kicked Uncle Will again!

[*From offstage come the sounds of a small riot approaching. The occasional bull yell of GANT, children chanting "Old Man Gant came home drunk," a dog barking, etc.*]

Eliza. [Weakly.] I don't think I can stand it again. A new young lady, too. [*EUGENE turns to see LAURA, who, with the other boarders, has heard the approaching GANT.*] Oh Eugene, why do they keep bringing him home? Take him to a state institution, throw him in the gutter, I don't care. I don't know what to do any more. What'll I do, child?

Eugene. At least it's been a month this time.

Gant. [Off.] Mountain Grills! Stay away from me!

Jake Clatt. My God, Mr. Gant's on the loose again!

Miss Mangle. Oh dear, oh dear——

Mrs. Clatt. What? What is it?

Jake Clatt. [Shouting.] The old boy's on the loose again!

Eugene. [Crossing up to the boarders.] Would you go inside, all of you, please?

Mrs. Clatt. I haven't finished my coffee.

Eugene. You can wait in the parlor. Please, just until we get him upstairs!

Jake Clatt. And miss the show?

Miss Brown. Come along, Mr. Farrel. Let's clear the deck for the old geezer.

Mr. Farrel. Perhaps there is some way I can help?

Miss Brown. I wouldn't recommend it, Mr. Farrel.

Jake Clatt. Look at him, he's really got a snootful this time!

[*EUGENE urges several of the boarders inside, where they cram in the hallway; JAKE and MRS. CLATT remain on the porch. LAURA, not knowing where to go, remains with HUGH outside.*]

Gant. [Bellowing, off.] Mountain Grills! Mountain Grills! Fiends, not friends! Don't push me! Get away from me!

Doctor Maguire. [Off.] All right then, Gant, if you can walk, walk!

[*ELIZA stands downstage, stiff and straight. W. O. GANT, 60, clatters up the back steps, his arms flailing, his powerful frame staggering, reeling. At heart he is a far wanderer and a minstrel, but he has degraded his life with libertinism and drink. In him still, though, there is a monstrous fumbling for life. He is accompanied by DR. MAGUIRE, unkempt but kind, and by TARKINGTON, a disreputable crony, also drunk but navigating, and by WILL PENTLAND.*]

Dr. Maguire. Here we are, Gant, let's go in the back way.

[*GANT pushes the DOCTOR aside, plunges headlong along the veranda, scattering rockers, flower pots, etc.*]

Gant. Where are you? Where are you? The lowest of the low—boarding-house swine! Merciful God, what a travesty! That it should come to this!

Eugene. Papa, come on. Papa, please!

[*EUGENE tries to take GANT by the arm; GANT flings him aside.*]

Gant. [With a sweeping gesture.]

"Waken lords and ladies gay

On the mountain dawns the day——"

Don't let me disturb your little tete-a-tete. Go right ahead, help yourself! [*MRS. CLATT screams and dashes into the hall.*] Another helping of mashed potatoes, Mrs. Clatt? Put another tire around your middle——

[*EUGENE tries to catch his father's flailing arms, is flung into MRS. PERT'S rocker.*]

Eliza. Mr. Gant, I'd be ashamed. I'd be ashamed.

Gant. Who speaks?

Eliza. I thought you were sick.

Gant. I am not sick, madame, I am in a wild, blind fury. You're a Mountain Grill!

[*Raises a chair aloft, threatening ELIZA. EUGENE and the DOCTOR grab it away from him.*]

Eliza. Dr. Maguire, get him in the house.

Dr. Maguire. Come on, Gant, let me help you.

Gant. [Plunging down the steps.] Just one moment! You don't think I know my own home when I see it? This is not where I live. I reside at 92 Woodson Street.

Dr. Maguire. That was some years ago. This is your home now, Gant.

Gant. This barn? This damnable, this awful, this murderous and bloody barn—home! Holy hell, what a travesty on nature!

Will. Why don't we carry him in?

Dr. Maguire. You keep out of this, Pentland. You're the one who enrages him.

Gant. Pentland—now that's a name for you! [*Pivots, searching for him.*] Where are you, Will Pentland? [*Sees him, staggers toward him.*] You're a Mountain Grill! Your father was a Mountain Grill and a horse thief, and he was hanged in the public square.

[*While HUGH holds GANT, EUGENE brings a cup of coffee.*]

Eugene. Papa, wouldn't you like some coffee? There's some right here.

Gant. Hah! Some of Mrs. Gant's good coffee? [*He kicks at the coffee cup.*] Ahh! I'll take some of that good bourbon, if you have it, son.

Dr. Maguire. Get him a drink! Maybe he'll pass out.

Gant. Drink!

[EUGENE starts into the house.]

Eliza. Gene! Dr. Maguire, you know there isn't a drop of alcohol in this house!

Laura. I have some. [As all stare at her, LAURA quickly opens her handbag, takes from it a small vial, crosses to the doctor.] I always carry it in case of a train accident.

Gant. Well, what are we waiting for, let's have it!

Dr. Maguire. [Taking the vial.] Good God, this won't fill one of his teeth.

Gant. [Roars.] Well, let's have it!

[LAURA backs away in fear. HELEN enters, the joy of being needed shining on her face.]

Dr. Maguire. You can have it, Gant, but you'll have to come up onto the veranda to drink it—

Gant. Mountain Grills! Vipers! Lowest of the low! I'll stand here until you take me home. Isn't anybody going to take me home?

Helen. Papa! Why have you been drinking again when you know what it does to you?

Gant. [Weakens, leans against her.] Helen—I have a pain right here.

Helen. Of course you do. Come with me now. I'll put you to bed, and bring you some soup.

[HELEN takes the huge man's arm, leads him toward the veranda. HELEN's success with GANT etches itself deeply into ELIZA's face.]

Gant. Got to sit down— [Sits on edge of veranda.] Sit down, Helen, you and me. Sit and talk. Would you like to hear some Keats . . . beautiful Keats?

Eliza. [Crossing up to veranda, angrily.] He's got his audience now. That's all he wants.

Eugene. Mama, he's sick!

Eliza. Mr. Gant, if you feel so bad, why don't you act nice and go inside? The whole neighborhood's watching you.

Gant. [Wildly sings.] "Old Man Gant came home drunk. . . . [TARKINGTON joins him.] Old Man Gant came home drunk. . . ."

Tarkington. [Singing, waving his arms.] "Old Man Gant came home. . . ."

[His joy fades as he sees ELIZA glaring at him.]

Eliza. Were you drinking with him too, Mr. Tarkington?

Tarkington. Sev-veral of us were, Mrs. Gant, I regret to say.

Eliza. [Pulling TARKINGTON to his feet.] I'll have Tim Laughran thrown in jail for this.

Tarkington. He started out so peaceable like. . . .

Eliza. [Pushing him toward rear exit of veranda.] I've warned him for the last time.

Tarkington. Just on beer!

Eliza. Get off my premises!

[TARKINGTON exits. GANT groans.]

Helen. Dr. Maguire's here to give you something for your pain, Papa.

Gant. Doctors! Thieves and bloodsuckers! "The paths of glory lead but to the grave."—Gray's Elegy. Only four cents a letter on any tombstone you choose, by the master carver! Any orders? [Groans, weak with pain.] It's the devil's own pitchfork. Don't let them put me under the knife—promise me, daughter. Promise me! [HELEN nods. With a giant effort, GANT pulls himself up.] "Over the stones, rattle his bones! He's only a beggar that nobody owns."

Dr. Maguire. Good God, he's on his feet again!

Eugene. Hugh, let's get him in the house.

Gant. [Throwing off HUGH and EUGENE.] I see it! I see it! Do you see the Dark Man's shadow? There! There he stands—the Grim Reaper—as I always knew he would. So you've come at last to take the old man home? Jesus, have mercy on my soul!

[GANT falls to the ground. There is an agonized silence. EUGENE, the DOCTOR, and HUGH rush to him.]

Eliza. [Anxiously.] Dr. Maguire?

[DR. MAGUIRE feels GANT's heart.]

Dr. Maguire. He's just passed out, Mrs. Gant. Men, let's carry him up!

[HUGH, WILL, MAGUIRE and EUGENE lift the heavy body, quickly carry GANT inside. HELEN follows. ELIZA, saddened and miserable, starts to gather up the coffee cups. LAURA picks up her suitcase and starts off. ELIZA turns, sees her.]

Eliza. Oh, Miss James. I was going to show you that room, wasn't I?

[Seizes LAURA's suitcase.]

Laura. Hmmmmmm?

Eliza. I think you'll enjoy it here. It's quiet and peaceful—oh, nobody pays any mind to Mr. Gant. I'll tell you what; we don't have occurrences like this every day.

Laura. Well, how much is it?

Eliza. Twenty—fifteen dollars a week. Three meals a day, and the use of electricity and the bath. Do you want me to show it to you?

Laura. No, I'm sure it will be all right.

Eliza. [Starting in, turns back.] That's in advance, that is.

[LAURA opens her purse, takes out a roll of one dollar bills, puts them one by one into ELIZA's outstretched hand.]

Laura. One, two, three—I always keep my money in one dollar bills—it feels like it's more.

Eliza. [Almost cheerful again.] Oh, I know what you mean.

[MR. FARREL enters by the side door with his suitcase. He is hoping to sneak out.]

Eliza. [Sees him as the paying business continues.] Mr. Farrel! Where are you going? Mr. Farrel, you've paid for a week in advance!

[MR. FARREL wordlessly gestures that it's all too much for him, exits.]

Eliza. Well, they come and they go. And you're here now, isn't that nice?

Laura. . . . Nine . . . ten. . . .

[BEN enters from the other direction, hurriedly.]

Ben. I heard about father—how is he?

Eliza. Drunk. Dr. Maguire's taking care of him now. Ben, this is Miss James . . . this is my son, Ben Gant.

Ben. [Impressed by her looks, nods.] Miss James.

Laura. [Barely looking at BEN, nods.]—fourteen, fifteen. There.

Eliza. [Puts the money in bosom of her dress.] Thank you dear. Miss James is going to stay with us a while, we hope! I'll take you up, dear. You'll be cozy and comfortable here. [They start inside.] I'll show you the rest of the house later.

Laura. [Turning in doorway.] Nice to have met you, Mr. Gant.

[ELIZA and LAURA exit.]

Ben. [Imitating LAURA's disinterest, as he picks up cup of coffee.] Nice to have met you, Mr. Gant.

[Shrugs, drinks coffee. WILL enters from the house, still sweating.]

Will. That father of yours. Do you know he kicked me? I don't want to tell you where. Why don't you watch out for him more, Ben? It's up to you boys, for your mother's sake—for Dixieland. I warned her about him . . . a born wanderer like he is, and a widower. But you can't advise women—not when it comes to love and sex. [He starts off, stops.] You might thank me for my help. No one else has.

Ben. Thank you, Uncle Will.

Will. Bunch of ungrateful Gants. You're the only one of them who has any class.

[WILL exits. BEN lights a cigarette.

EUGENE enters.]

Eugene. Did you hear about it, Ben?

Ben. There isn't a soul in town who hasn't. Eugene. What's it all about? It doesn't make sense. Can you figure it out, Ben? Why does he do it?

Ben. How should I know? [Drinks his coffee.] Is Maguire almost through?

Eugene. [Hurt, not understanding BEN's preoccupation.] Ben, remember in the morning when we used to walk together and you were teaching me the paper route? We talked a lot then.

Ben. Listen to him! We're talking.

Eugene. If he hates it so much here, why does he stay?

Ben. You stupid little fool, it's like being caught in a photograph. Your face is there, and no matter how hard you try, how are you going to step out of a photograph? [DOCTOR MAGUIRE enters.] Shut up now, will you? Hello, Doc.

Dr. Maguire. Your sister sure can handle that old goat like a lamb! The funny thing though is that people like him. He's a good man, when sober.

Ben. Is he all right?

Dr. Maguire. He's going to be.

Ben. Can I speak to you a minute about me? If you have a minute.

Dr. Maguire. Shoot, Ben.

Ben. [To EUGENE.] Haven't you got something else to do?

Eugene. [Seating himself.] No.

Dr. Maguire. What's the matter—you got pyorrhea of the toenails, or is it something more private?

Ben. I'm tired of pushing daisies here. I want to push them somewhere else.

Dr. Maguire. What's that supposed to mean?

Ben. I suppose you've heard there's a war going on in Europe? I've decided to enlist in Canada.

Eugene. [Rises.] What do you want to do that for?

Ben. [To EUGENE.] You keep out of this.

Dr. Maguire. It is a good question, Ben. Do you want to save the world? This world?

Ben. In Christ's name, Maguire, you'll recommend me, won't you? You examined me just a couple of months ago.

Dr. Maguire. [Puts down his bag.] Well, let's see, for a war the requirements are somewhat different. Stick out your chest. [BEN does so; the DOCTOR looks him over.] Feet? Good arch, but pigeon-toed.

Ben. Since when do you need toes to shoot a gun?

Dr. Maguire. How're your teeth, son?

Ben. Aren't you overdoing it, Doc?

[BEN draws back his lips and shows two rows of hard white grinders. Unexpectedly, MAGUIRE prods BEN's solar plexus with a strong yellow finger and BEN's distended chest collapses. He sinks to the veranda edge, coughing.]

Eugene. What did you do that for?

Dr. Maguire. They'll have to save this world without you, Ben.

Ben. [Rises, grabs the DOCTOR.] What do you mean?

Dr. Maguire. That's all. That's all.

Ben. You're saying I'm not all right?

Dr. Maguire. Who said you weren't all right?

Ben. Quit your kidding.

Dr. Maguire. What's the rush? We may get into this war ourselves before too long. Wait a bit. [To EUGENE.] Isn't that right, son?

Ben. I want to know. Am I all right or not?

Dr. Maguire. Yes, Ben, you're all right. Why, you're one of the most all right people I know. [Carefully, as he feels BEN's arms.] You're a little run down, that's all. You need some meat on those bones. [BEN breaks from him, moves away.] You can't exist with a cup of coffee in one hand and a cigarette in the other. Besides, the Altamont air is good for you. Stick around. Big breaths, Ben, big breaths.

[Picks up his bag.]

Ben. Thanks. As a doctor, you're a fine first baseman.

Dr. Maguire. Take it easy. Try not to care too much. [Exits.]

Eugene. He's right. You should try to look after yourself more, Ben.

[EUGENE tries to comfort BEN. BEN avoids his touch, lurches away.]

Ben. He doesn't have any spirit about this war, that's all that's the matter with him.

[BEN recovers his coffee, drinks. EUGENE studies him.]

Eugene. I didn't know you wanted to get away from here so badly.

Ben. [Looks over at EUGENE, puts down coffee.] Come here, you little bum. [EUGENE approaches close.] My God, haven't you got a clean shirt? [He gets out some money.] Here, take this and go get that damn long hair cut off, and get some shoes that fit, for God's sake. You look like a lousy tramp. . . .

Eugene. [Backing away.] Ben, I can't keep taking money from you.

Ben. What else have you got me for?

[The brothers roughhouse playfully with the money, EUGENE giggling. Then, with sudden intense ferocity, BEN seizes EUGENE's arms, shakes him.] You listen to me. Listen to me. You go to college, understand? Don't settle for anyone or anything—learn your lesson from me! I'm a hack on a hick paper—I'll never be anything else. You can be. Get money out of them, anyway you can! Beg it, take it, steal it, but get it from them somehow. Get it and get away from them. To hell with them all! [BEN coughs. EUGENE tries to help him. BEN escapes, sits tiredly on the veranda's edge. EUGENE disconsolately sinks into a nearby chair.] Neither Luke, nor Stevie, nor I made it. But you can, Gene. I let her hold on and hold on until it was too late. Don't let that happen to you. And Gene, don't try to please everyone—please yourself. [BEN studies EUGENE, realizes his confusion and depression. Then, noticing LAURA's hat which she has left on the yard table, he points to it.] Where's she from?

Eugene. [Follows BEN's gaze to LAURA's hat, picks it up, sniffs it.] I don't know. I don't even know her name.

Ben. Miss James. I'll have to announce her arrival in my society column. [Takes hat from EUGENE, admires it.] The firm young line of spring . . . budding, tender, virginal. "Like something swift, with wings, which hovers in a wood—among the feathery trees, suspected, but uncaught, unseen." Exquisite. [Returns hat to table, rises.] Want to walk downtown with me? I'll buy you a cup of mocha.

Eugene. Maybe I ought to stay here.

Ben. [Ruffling EUGENE's hair.] With her around I don't blame you. I dream of elegant women myself, all the time.

Eugene. [Rising.] You do? But, Ben, if you dream of elegant women, how is it . . . well—

Ben. Mrs. Pert? Fatty's a happy woman—there's no pain in her she feels she has to unload onto someone else. Besides, she's as adorable as a duck. Don't you think so?

Eugene. I guess you're right. I like her—myself . . . sure.

Ben. Someday you'll find out what it means. I've got to get back to work.

Eugene. Ben, I'm glad they won't take you in Canada.

Ben. [With that upward glance.] Listen to him! I was crazy to think of going. I have to bring you up first, don't I?

[BEN exits. EUGENE walks about restlessly, looks up at LAURA's window.]

MISS BROWN, *dressed for a stroll, carrying a parasol, enters from the house.*

Miss Brown. Gene! You haven't even said hello to me today.

Eugene. Hello, Miss Brown.

Miss Brown. My, everything's quiet again. Lovely warm day, isn't it?

[MISS BROWN sings and dances sensuously for EUGENE.]

"Pony boy, pony boy,
Won't you be my pony boy?

Don't say no, can't we go

Right across the plains?

[MISS BROWN approaches EUGENE; he backs away from her, stumbling against the table.]

Marry me, carry me

Far away with you!

[She starts out through rear veranda.]

Giddy-ap, giddy-ap, giddy-ap. Oh!

My pony boy!"

[MISS BROWN exits. EUGENE sits on the yard seat, takes off one shoe and rubs his aching toes. LAURA enters, picks up her hat, sees EUGENE. EUGENE hides his shoeless foot.]

Miss Brown. [Off stage, fainter.]

"Pony boy, pony boy

Mmmm, mmm, mmmm—Mmmmm, mmmm, mmmm,

Marry me, carry me

Far away with you!

Giddy-ap, giddy-ap, giddy-ap. Oh!

My pony boy."

[At the door, LAURA looks again at EUGENE, smiles, exits.]

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

SCENE II

The Dixieland Boarding House. The night is sensuous, warm. A light storm is threatening. Long, swaying tree shadows project themselves on the house.

[Seated on the side veranda are JAKE, MRS. CLATT, FLORRY, MISS BROWN, and MRS. SNOWDEN. MRS. PERT is seated in her rocker, BEN on the steps beside her. They are drinking beer. MRS. PERT measures the socks she is knitting against BEN's shoe. JAKE CLATT softly plays the ukelele and sings. EUGENE is sitting on the side door steps, lonely, yearning.]

Jake. [Singing.] "K-k-katy, K-k-katy" [etc.]

[As JAKE finishes, FLORRY gently applauds. JAKE starts softly strumming something else.]

Mrs. Pert. [To BEN, quietly.] I know you talked to the doctor today. What did he say? Tell Fatty.

Ben. I'm out before I'm in. Oh, I know you're pleased, but you don't know how it feels to be the weakling. All the other members of this family—they're steers, mountain goats, eagles. Except father, lately—unless he's drunk. Do you know, though, I still think of him as I thought of him as a little boy—a Titan! The house on Woodson Street that he built for Mama with his own hands,

the great armloads of food he carried home . . . the giant fires he used to build. The women he loved at Madame Elizabeth's. Two and three a night, I heard.

Mrs. Pert. It's nice for parents to have their children think of them as they were young. [As BEN chuckles.] I mean, that's the way I'd like my children to think of me. Oh, you know what I mean.

Ben. [Laughs with his typical glance upward.] Listen to her!

Mrs. Pert. Ben, who are you always talking to, like that?

[Imitates BEN looking up over his shoulder.]

Ben. Who, him? [She nods.] That's Grover, my twin. It was a habit I got into, while he was still alive.

Mrs. Pert. I wish you'd known me when I was young. I was some different.

Ben. I bet you weren't half as nice and warm and round as you are now.

Mrs. Pert. Ben, don't ever let your mother hear you say those things. What could she think?

Ben. Who cares what she thinks?

Mrs. Pert. Dear, I only hope when the right girl comes along you won't be sorry for the affection you've lavished on me.

Ben. I don't want the right girl. Like some more beer? I've got another bottle.

Mrs. Pert. Love some more, honey.

[BEN rises, searches under the yard table for the bottle he has hidden, real-

izes it's not there, suspiciously looks at EUGENE. EUGENE innocently gestures, then reaches behind him and tosses the beer bottle to BEN. BEN and FATTY laugh. BEN returns with the beer to FATTY as LAURA enters from the house.]

Jake. [Rising expectantly.] Good evening, Miss James.

Laura. Good evening.

Jake. Won't you sit down?

Mrs. Clatt. [As LAURA seems about to choose a chair.] That's Mr. Farrel's. Yours is back there!

Jake. [Loudly.] Mr. Farrel has left, Mother.

Mrs. Clatt. What?

Jake. Never mind. [To LAURA.] No sense in being formal. Won't you sing with me, Miss James?

Laura. I love music, but I have no talent for it.

[LAURA moves toward rear of veranda, away from the others.]

Florry. [To JAKE.] I love to sing.

[JAKE ignores FLORRY, follows after LAURA, FLORRY tugging at JAKE's coat.]

Mrs. Snowden. [To JAKE as he passes.] Do you know Indiana Lullaby? It's a lovely song. [JAKE and LAURA exit.]

Ben. I'm comfortable when I'm with you, Fatty.

Mrs. Pert. That's good, so'm I.

Ben. People don't understand. Jelly roll isn't everything, is it?

Mrs. Pert. Ben Gant, what kind of a vulgar phrase is that?

Ben. It's a Stumptown word. I used to deliver papers there. Sometimes those negro women don't have money to pay their bill, so they pay you in jelly roll.

Mrs. Pert. Ben—your little brother's right over there listening!

Ben. [Glances toward EUGENE.] Gene knows all about jelly roll, don't you? Where do you think he's been all his life—in Mama's front parlor?

Eugene. Oh, come on, Ben!

Ben. [Laughs.] There's another word I remember in the eighth grade. We had a thin, anxious looking teacher. The boys had a poem about her. [Quotes.]

"Old Miss Groody
Has good Toody."

Fatty. Ben, stop it!

[They both laugh. LAURA has managed to lose JAKE, and has strolled around the back of the house. She enters to EUGENE from the side door.]

Laura. Good evening.

Eugene. What!

Laura. I said good evening.

Eugene. [Flustered.] Goodyado.

Laura. I beg your pardon?

Eugene. I mean—I meant to say good evening, how do you do?

Laura. Goodyado! I like that much better. Goodyado! [They shake hands, LAURA reacting to EUGENE's giant grip.] Don't you think that's funny?

Eugene. [Sits on yard seat.] It's about as funny as most things I do.

Laura. May I sit down?

Eugene. [Leaping up.]. Please.

Laura. [As they both sit.] I'm Laura James.

Eugene. I know. My name's Eugene Gant.

Laura. You know, I've seen you before.

Eugene. Yes, earlier this afternoon.

Laura. I mean before that. I saw you throw those advertising cards in the gutter.

Eugene. You did?

Laura. I was coming from the station. You know where the train crosses the street? You were just standing there staring at it. I walked right by you and smiled at you. I never got such a snub before in my whole life. My, you must be crazy about trains.

Eugene. You stood right beside me? Where are you from?

Laura. Richmond, Virginia.

Eugene. Richmond! That's a big city, isn't it?

Laura. It's pretty big.

Eugene. How many people?

Laura. Oh, about a hundred and twenty thousand, I'd say.

Eugene. Are there a lot of pretty parks and boulevards?

Laura. Oh yes . . .

Eugene. And fine tall buildings, with elevators?

Laura. Yes, it's quite a metropolis.

Eugene. Theatres and things like that?

Laura. A lot of good shows come to Richmond. Are you interested in shows?

Eugene. You have a big library. Did you know it has over a hundred thousand books in it?

Laura. No, I didn't know that.

Eugene. Well, it does. I read that somewhere. It would take a long time to read a hundred thousand books, wouldn't it?

Laura. Yes, it would.

Eugene. I figure about twenty years. How many books do they let you take out at one time?

Laura. I really don't know.

Eugene. They only let you take out two here!

Laura. That's too bad.

Eugene. You have some great colleges in Virginia. Did you know that William and Mary is the second oldest college in the country?

Laura. Is it? What's the oldest?

Eugene. Harvard! I'd like to study there! First, Chapel Hill. That's our state university. Then Harvard. I'd like to study all over the world, learn all its languages. I love words, don't you?

Laura. Yes, yes, I do.

Eugene. Are you laughing at me?

Laura. Of course not.

Eugene. You are smiling a lot!

Laura. I'm smiling because I'm enjoying myself. I like talking to you.

Eugene. I like talking to you, too. I always talk better with older people.

Laura. Oh!

Eugene. They know so much more.

Laura. Like me?

Eugene. Yes. You're very interesting.

Laura. Am I?

Eugene. Oh yes! You're very interesting!

[JAKE CLATT approaches, FLORY MANGLE hovering anxiously on the veranda.]

Jake Clatt. Miss James?

Laura. Yes, Mr. Platt?

Jake Clatt. Clatt.

Laura. Clatt.

Jake Clatt. Jake Clatt! It's a lovely evening. Would you like to take a stroll?

Laura. It feels to me like it's going to rain.

Jake Clatt. [Looking at the sky.] Oh, I don't know.

Eugene. [Rising, moving in between LAURA and JAKE.] It's going to rain, all right.

Jake Clatt. Oh, I wouldn't be so sure!

Laura. Perhaps some other time, Mr. Clatt.

Jake Clatt. Certainly. Good night, Miss James. Good night, sonny.

[EUGENE glares after JAKE, who returns to the veranda. The other boarders have disappeared. JAKE and FLORRY exit. FATTY and BEN still sit on the steps. A train whistle moans mournfully in the distance. EUGENE cocks an ear, listens.]

Laura. You do like trains, don't you?

Eugene. Mama took us on one to St. Louis to the Fair, when I was only five. Have you ever touched one?

Laura. What?

Eugene. A locomotive. Have you put your hand on one? You have to feel things to fully understand them.

Laura. Aren't they rather hot?

Eugene. Even a cold one, standing in a station yard. You know what you feel? You feel the shining steel rails under it . . . and the rails send a message right into your hand—a message of all the mountains that engine ever passed—all the flowing rivers, the forests, the towns, all the houses, the people, the washlines flapping in the fresh cool breeze—the beauty of the people in the way they live and the way they work—a farmer waving from his field, a kid from the school yard—the faraway places it roars through at night, places you don't even know, can hardly imagine. Do you believe it? You feel the rhythm of a whole life, a whole country clicking through your hand.

Laura. [Impressed.] I'm not sure we all would. I believe you do.

[There is a moment while LAURA looks at EUGENE. BEN moves up to the veranda and the phonograph, plays the record "Genevieve." EUGENE and LAURA speak simultaneously.]

Eugene. How long do you plan to . . .

Laura. How old are you . . . ?

Eugene. I'm sorry—please.

[Draws a chair close to LAURA, straddles it, facing her.]

Laura. No, you.

Eugene. How long do you plan to stay, here, Miss James?

Laura. My name is Laura. I wish you'd call me that.

Eugene. Laura. It's a lovely name. Do you know what it means?

Laura. No.

Eugene. I read a book once on the meaning of names. Laura is the laurel. The Greek symbol of victory.

Laura. Victory. Maybe someday I'll live up to that! [After a second.] What does Eugene mean?

Eugene. Oh, I forget.

Laura. You, forget?

Eugene. It means "well born."

Laura. How old are you?

Eugene. Why?

Laura. I'm always curious about people's ages.

Eugene. So am I. How old are you?

Laura. I'm twenty-one. You?

Eugene. Nineteen. Will you be staying here long?

Laura. I don't know exactly.

Eugene. You're only twenty-one?

Laura. How old did you think I was?

Eugene. Oh, about that. About twenty-one, I'd say. That's not old at all!

Laura. [Laughs.] I don't feel it is!

Eugene. I was afraid you might think I was too young for you to waste time with like this!

Laura. I don't think nineteen is young at all!

Eugene. It isn't, really, is it?

Laura. Gene, if we keep rushing together like this, we're going to have a collision.

[*LAURA rises, moves away from EUGENE. He follows her. They sit together on the side steps, reaching with whispers toward each other. The turntable revolves, removing EUGENE'S room and revealing GANT'S room.*]

Fatty. Ben, what's your full name?

Ben. Benjamin Harrison Gant. Why?

Fatty. I thought Ben was short for benign.

Ben. Benign! Listen to her!

[*They laugh. The lights come up in GANT'S bedroom. ELIZA, carrying a pitcher and a glass, enters. GANT is in bed, turned away from her.*]

Gant. Helen?

Eliza. [Bitterly.] No, it's not Helen, Mr.

Gant. [Pours a glass of water.]

Gant. [Without turning.] If that's water, take it away.

Eliza. Why aren't you asleep? Do you have any pain?

Gant. None but the everyday pain of thinking. You wouldn't know what that is.

Eliza. I wouldn't know?

[*She starts picking up GANT'S strewn clothing.*]

Gant. How could you? You're always so busy puttering.

Eliza. All the work I do around here, and you call it puttering?

Gant. Some people are doers, some are thinkers.

Eliza. Somebody has to do, Mr. Gant. Somebody has to. Oh! I know you look on yourself as some kind of artist fella—but personally, a man who has to be brought maudlin through the streets—screaming curses—if you call that artistic!

Gant. The hell hound is at it again. Shut up, woman!

Eliza. Mr. Gant, I came in here to see if there was something I could do for you. Only pity in my heart. Now will you please turn over and look at me when I talk to you? You know I can't stand being turned away from!

Gant. You're a bloody monster; you would drink my heart's blood!

Eliza. You don't mean that—we've come this far together, I guess we can continue to the end. You know I was thinking only this morning about the first day we met. Do

you realize it was thirty-one years ago, come July?

Gant [Groaning.] Merciful God, thirty-one long miserable years.

Eliza. I can remember like it was yesterday. I'd just come down from Cousin Sally's and I passed by your shop and there you were. I'll vow you looked as big as one of your tombstones—and as dusty—with a wild and dangerous look in your eye. You were romantic in those days—like the fellow says, a regular courtin' fool—"Miss Pentland," you said, "you have come into this hot and grubby shop like a cooling, summer shower—like a cooling, summer shower." That's just what you said!

Gant. And you've been a wet blanket ever since.

Eliza. I forgive you your little jokes, Mr. Gant. I forgive your little jokes.

[*Sits beside him, finds needle and thread under her collar, mends his dressing gown.*]

Gant. Do you? [Slowly turns and looks at her finally.] Do you ever forgive me, Eliza? If I could make you understand something. I was such a strong man. I was dozing just now, dreaming of the past. The far past. The people and the place I came from. Those great barns of Pennsylvania. The order, the thrift, the plenty. It all started out so right, there. There I was a man who set out to get order and position in life. And what have I come to? Only rioting and confusion, searching and wandering. There was so much before, so much. Now it's all closing in. My God, Eliza, where has it all gone? Why am I here, now, at the rag end of my life? The years are all blotted and blurred—my youth a red waste—I've gotten old, an old man. But why here? Why here?

Eliza. You belong here, Mr. Gant, that's why! You belong here.

[*She touches his hand.*]

Gant. [Throws away her hand.] And as I get weaker and weaker, you get stronger and stronger!

Eliza. Pshaw! If you feel that way, it's because you have no position in life. If you'd ever listened to me once, things would have been different. You didn't believe me, did you, when I told you that little, old marble shop of yours would be worth a fortune someday? Will and I happened to be downtown this morning . . . [GANT groans.] . . . and old Mr. Beecham from the bank stopped us on the street and he said, "Mrs. Gant, the bank is looking for a site to build a big new office building, and do you know the one we

have our eye on?" And I said, "No." "We have our eye on Mr. Gant's shop, and we're willing to pay twenty thousand dollars for it!" Now, what do you think of that?

Gant. And you came in here with only pity in your heart!

Eliza. Well, I'll tell you what, twenty thousand dollars is a lot of money! Like the fellow says, "It ain't hay!"

Gant. And my angel, my Carrara angel? You were going to sell her too?

Eliza. The angel, the angel, the angel. I'm so tired of hearing about that angel!

Gant. You always have been. Money dribbled from your honeyed lips, but never a word about my angel. I've started twenty pieces of marble trying to capture her. But my life's work doesn't interest you.

Eliza. If you haven't been able to do it in all these years, don't you think your gift as a stonemason may be limited?

Gant. Yes, Mrs. Gant, it may be limited. It may be limited.

Eliza. Then why don't you sell the shop? We can pay off the mortgage at Dixieland and then just set back big as you please and live off the income from the boarders the rest of our lives!

Gant. [*Furious, he all but leaps from the bed.*] Oh holy hell! Wow-ee! The boarders! That parade of incognito pimps and prostitutes, calling themselves penniless dancing masters, pining widows, part-time teachers and God knows what all! Woman, have mercy! That shop is my last refuge on earth. I beg you—let me die in peace! You won't have long to wait. You can do what you please with it after I've gone. But give me a little comfort now. *And leave me my work.* At least my first wife understood what it meant to me. [*He sentimentally seeks the plump pillow.*] Cynthia, Cynthia . . .

Eliza. [*Coldly.*] You promised me you would never mention her name to me again. [*There is a long silence. ELIZA bites the sewing thread.*] Mr. Gant, I guess I never will understand you. I guess that's just the way it is. Good night. Try to get some sleep. [*She rises, tucks the bed clothes about him.*] I reckon it's like the fellow says, some people never get to understand each other—not in this life.

[*ELIZA exits, stands outside GANT'S door, trying to pull herself together.*]

Gant. [*Moans.*] Oh-h-h, I curse the day I was given life by that bloodthirsty monster up above. Oh-h-h, Jesus! I beg of you. I know I've been bad. Forgive me. Have

mercy and pity upon me. Give me another chance in Jesus' name. . . . Oh-h-h!

[*The turntable removes GANT'S room, replacing it with EUGENE'S room. Lights come up on the veranda. LAURA and EUGENE still sit on the side steps. FATTY and BEN, as earlier, seated, are softly laughing. ELIZA, bitterly warped by her scene with GANT, enters. She starts gathering up the boarders' coffee cups and saucers.*]

Mrs. Pert. [*A little giddy.*] Why, if it isn't Mrs. Gant! Why don't you sit down and join us for a while?

Eliza. [*Her sweeping glance takes in the beer glasses.*] I've told you before, Mrs. Pert, I don't tolerate drinking at Dixieland!

Ben. Oh, Mama, for God's sake . . .

Eliza. [*Angrily turns off the phonograph.*] You two can be heard all over the house with your carrying on.

Ben. Carrying on—listen to her!

Eliza. You're keeping the boarders awake.

Ben. They just went in!

Eliza. As I came past your door just now, Mrs. Pert, there was a light under it. If you're going to spend all night out here, there's no sense in wasting electricity.

Ben. The Lord said "Let there be light," even if it's only forty watts.

Eliza. Don't you get on your high horse with me, Ben Gant. You're not the one who has to pay the bills! If you did, you'd laugh out of the other side of your mouth. I don't like any such talk. You've squandered every penny you've ever earned because you've never known the value of a dollar!

Ben. The value of a dollar! [*Rises, goes into hall to get his jacket.*] Oh, what the hell's the use of it anyway? Come on, Fatty, let's go for a stroll.

Fatty. [*Rises.*] Whatever you say, Ben, old Fatty's willing.

Eliza. [*Attacking MRS. PERT.*] I don't want any butt-ins from you, do you understand? You're just a paying boarder here. That's all. You're not a member of my family, and never will be, no matter what low methods you try!

Eugene. [*Leaving LAURA, miserable.*] Mama, please!

Eliza. [*To EUGENE.*] I'm only trying to keep decency and order here, and this is the thanks I get! You should all get down on your knees and be grateful to me!

Ben. [*Coming out of hall, slamming the screen door.*] What am I supposed to be grateful for? For what?

Fatty. [*Trying to stop it.*] Ben, Ben, come on.

Ben. For selling the house that papa built with his own hands and moving us into this drafty barn where we share our roof, our food, our pleasures, our privacy so that you can be Queen Bee? Is that what I'm supposed to be grateful for?

Eliza. [*Picks up bottle and glasses.*] It's that vile liquor that's talking!

Eugene. Let's stop it! For God's sake, let's stop it! Mama, go to bed, please. Ben . . .

[*EUGENE sees that LAURA has exited into the house. He frantically looks after her.*]

Ben. Look at your kid there! You've had him out on the streets since he was eight years old—collecting bottles, selling papers—anything that would bring in a penny.

Eliza. Gene is old enough to earn his keep!

Ben. Then he's old enough for you to let go of him! But no, you'd rather hang on to him like a piece of property! Maybe he'll grow in value, you can turn a quick trade on him, make a profit on him. He isn't a son, he's an investment! You're so penny-mad that—

[*Shifting the bottles and glasses into one hand, ELIZA slaps BEN. There is a long silence. They stare at each other.*]

Ben. Come on, Fatty.

[*BEN exits, past FATTY, down the street.*]

Fatty. He didn't mean it, Mrs. Gant. [*She follows BEN.*] Ben? Ben, wait for Fatty!

[*A moment's pause.*]

Eugene. [*Quietly, miserably.*] Mama. Mama. Mama!

Eliza. Well, she puts him up to it! He never used to talk to me like that. You stood right there and saw it. Now I'll just ask you: was it my fault? Well, was it?

Eugene. [*Looks after LAURA.*] Mama, Mama, in God's name go to bed, won't you? Just go to bed and forget about it, won't you?

Eliza. All of you. Every single one of you. Your father, then Ben, now you . . . you all blame me. And not one of you has any idea, any idea . . . you don't know what I've had to put up with all these years.

Eugene. Oh Mama, stop! Please stop!

Eliza. [*Sinking onto the steps.*] I've done the best I could. I've done the best I could. Your father's never given me a moment's peace. Nobody knows what I've been through with him. Nobody knows, child, nobody knows.

Eugene. [*Sits beside her.*] I know, Mama. I do know. Forget about it! It's all right.

Eliza. You just can't realize. You don't know what a day like this does to me. Ben

and I used to be so close—especially after little Grover died. I don't think a mother and son were ever closer. You don't remember when he was a youngster, the little notes he was always writing me. I'd find them slipped under my door, when he got up early to go on his paper route . . . "Good morning, Mama!" . . . "Have a nice day, Mama . . ." We were so close . . .

Eugene. It's late. You're tired.

Eliza. [*Managing to pull herself together, rises.*] Well, like the fellow says, it's no use crying over that spilt milk. I have all those napkins and towels to iron for tomorrow.

Eugene. [*Rises, looking toward LAURA's room.*] The boarders can get along without new napkins tomorrow, Mama. Why don't you get some sleep?

Eliza. Well, I tell you what: I'm not going to spend my life slaving away here for a bunch of boarders. They needn't think it. I'm going to sit back and take things as easy as any of them. One of these days you may just find us Gants living in a big house in Doak Park. I've got the lot—the best lot out there. I made the trade with old Mr. Doak himself the other day. What about that? [*She laughs.*] He said, "Mrs. Gant, I can't trust any of my agents with you. If I'm to make anything on this deal, I've got to look out. You're the sharpest trader in this town!" "Why, pshaw, Mr. Doak," I said (I never let on I believed him or anything), "all I want is a fair return on my investment. I believe in everyone making his profit and giving the other fellow a chance. Keep the ball a-rolling," I said, laughing as big as you please! [*She laughs again in recollection.*] "You're the sharpest trader in this town." That's exactly his words. Oh, dear. [*EUGENE joins her laughter.*] Well . . . I'd better get at those napkins. Are you coming in, child?

Eugene. [*Looks toward LAURA's room.*] In a little while.

Eliza. Don't forget to turn off the sign. Goodnight, son. [*EUGENE returns to ELIZA. She kisses him.*] Get a good night's sleep, boy. You mustn't neglect your health.

[*She starts in.*]

Eugene. Don't work too late.

[*EUGENE starts toward the side door.*]

Eliza. Gene, you know where Sunset Terrace runs up the hill? At the top of the rise? Right above Dick Webster's place. That's my lot. You know where I mean, don't you?

Eugene. Yes, Mama.

Eliza. And that's where we'll build—right on the very top. I tell you what, though,

in another five years that lot'll bring twice the value. You mark my words!

Eugene. Yes, Mama. Now, for God's sake, go and finish your work so you can get to sleep!

Eliza. No sir, they needn't think I'm going to slave away all my life. I've got plans, same as the next fellow! You'll see. [*Off stage, the church chimes start to sound the midnight hour.*] Well, good night, son.

Eugene. Good night, Mama . . . [*ELIZA exits. EUGENE calls with desperate softness.*] Laura . . . Laura!! [*Gives up, turns away. LAURA enters through the side door. EUGENE turns, sees her.*] Did you hear all that? I'm sorry, Laura.

Laura. What's there to be sorry about?

Eugene. Would you like to take a walk?

Laura. It's a lovely evening.

Eugene. It might rain.

Laura. I love the rain.

[*EUGENE and LAURA hold out their hands to each other. EUGENE approaches her, takes her hand. They go off together. For a moment the stage is silent. ELIZA enters with an envelope in her hand.*]

Eliza. See, looky here—I made a map of it. Sunset Terrace goes . . . [*She looks around.*] Gene? Eugene? [*She looks up towards EUGENE's room.*] Gene, I asked you to turn out the sign! That boy. I don't know what I'm going to do with him. [*ELIZA goes into the hall, turns out the sign and stands for a moment. Offstage, a passerby is whistling "Genevieve." ELIZA comes down to the edge of the veranda and looks out into the night in the direction taken by BEN and FATTY.*] Ben? Ben?

SLOW CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE I

Gant's marble yard and shop. A week later.

Under a high, wide shed is the sign: W. O. GANT—STONE CARVER. The shed is on a back street, behind the town square. In the distance can be seen the outline of Dixieland. Inside the shed are slabs of marble and granite and some finished monuments . . . an urn, a couchant lamb and several angels. The largest and most prominent monument is a delicately carved angel of a lustrous white Carrara marble, with an especially beautiful smiling countenance. There is a cutting area down stage right, protected from the sun by a shade, where EUGENE, wearing one of his father's aprons, is discovered operating a pedalled emery wheel. At the other side of the shed is an office with a grimy desk, a telephone, and a curtain into another room beyond. A sidewalk runs between the shed and a picket fence up stage. Near the office is a stone seat, bearing the inscription, "Rest here in peace."

[*ELIZA enters from the street. The prim shabbiness of her dress is in contrast to her energetic mood and walk.*]

Eliza. [*Crosses to office, calls inside.*] Mr. Gant! Mr. Gant!

Eugene. [*Stops wheel, calls.*] Papa's not here now, Mama.

Eliza. [*Approaches EUGENE just as he accidentally blows some marble dust in her face.*] Where is he? Gene, you know I can't stand that marble dust—will you step out here where I can talk to you? [*As EUGENE ambles out to her.*] Besides, I can't stand not to see the face I'm talking to. My goodness, spruce up, boy—how many times do I have to tell you? Shoulders back—like you are somebody. And smile, look pleasant. [*EUGENE gives that idiotic grin.*] Oh pshaw! I hope your father's not over at you-know-where again.

Eugene. He went to buy a newspaper for the obituaries.

Eliza. How enterprising of him! But he won't follow up on it. Oh no, he says it's ghoulish to contact the bereaved ones right off. I declare, tombstones are no business anyway, anymore—in this day and age people die too slowly. [*Sinks onto stone seat, leans back, for a brief instant seems actually to rest.*] I tell you what, this feels good. I wish I had as much time as some folks and could sit outside and enjoy the air. [*Observes EUGENE, looking at her dress as he*

works lettering a marble slab.] What are you looking at? I don't have a rent, do I?

Eugene. I was just noticing you have on your dealing and bargaining costume again.

Eliza. Eugene Gant, whatever do you mean by that? Don't I look all right? Heaven knows, I always try to look neatly respectable.

Eugene. Come on, Mama.

Eliza. What! I declare! I might have a better dress than this, but law's sake, there's some places it don't pay to advertise it! Oh, Gene, you're smart, smart, I tell you! You've got a future ahead of you, child.

Eugene. Mama, what kind of a future have I got if I can't get an education?

Eliza. Pshaw, boy, you'll get your education if my plans work out! I'll tell you what though—in the meantime, it wouldn't hurt you to work in Uncle Will's office, would it?

Eugene. I don't know anything about real estate, Mama.

Eliza. What do you have to know? Buying and selling is an instinct, and you've got it. You've got my eye for looking and seeing and remembering, and that's what's important. Why, there isn't a vital statistic about a soul in Altamont I don't carry right in my head. What they make, what they owe—what they're hiding, what they show! [*She laughs, enjoying her cleverness.*] You see, Eugene, I'm a poet, too—"a poet and I don't know it, but my feet show it—they're longfellows!" [*She leans back, chuckles.*] Oh dear, I can't get a smile out of you this morning. You've been so strange all this last week. [*Rises, slaps him on the back.*] Gene, stand with your shoulders back. If you go humped over, you'll get lung trouble sure as you're born. [*Moves upstage, looks toward the town center where she presumes GANT is.*] That's one thing about your papa: he always carried himself straight as a rod. Of course, he's not as straight now as he used to be—Gene, what in the world are you standing on one foot and then the other for? Do you have to go to the bathroom?

Eugene. Mama! Asking me that at my age!

Eliza. Then why are you fidgeting? It's not often we have a nice chance to chat like this.

Eugene. Papa's paying me thirty cents an hour!

Eliza. Paying you? How did you manage that?

Eugene. I told him I needed the money.

Eliza. For heaven's sake, what for? You've got your room and board.

Eugene. Don't you think I need new clothes, for one thing?

Eliza. Pshaw! The way you're still growing? It doesn't pay. [*She purses her lips, looks at him significantly.*] Has my baby gone and got himself a girl?

Eugene. What of it? What if it were true? Haven't I as much right as anyone?

Eliza. Pshaw! You're too young to think of girls, especially that Miss James. She's practically a mature woman compared to you. I don't think you realize how young you are, just because you're tall and read a lot of books. [*Sound of car. ELIZA looks off.*] Pshaw! That's your Uncle Will come for me. Say, how long does it take your father to buy a newspaper, anyway?

Eugene. He said he'd be right back. Is it something important?

Eliza. Oh, I've got plans, Gene, plans for him, plans for all of us. Well, tell him I'll be back. Second thought, don't tell him, I'll just catch him. I want you to be here too. Work hard, child!

[*ELIZA exits, the car leaves. EUGENE approaches the Carrara angel, touches the draped folds over her breast. GANT enters, watches, smiling. He has had a few beers, but he is not drunk. EUGENE becomes aware of his father's presence, starts guiltily.*]

Gant. I've done that myself many a time, son. Many a time. Well, what did your mother have to say?

Eugene. Did you see her?

Gant. I've been sitting over at Laughran's waiting for her to leave. What a longwinded bag!

Eugene. You promised the doctor you wouldn't go to Laughran's.

Gant. [*Putting on his apron.*] What difference does it make? A couple of beers won't hurt what I've got. Was that Will Pentland she went off with?

Eugene. Yes.

Gant. Aha! And she said she'd be back?

Eugene. Yes.

Gant. I have a mind what she's up to. She'll be back with freshly drawn-up papers tucked in her bosom. Yes, when you touch the breast of Miss Eliza, you feel the sharp crackle of bills of sale, not like the bosom of this angel. She begins to look better after a bath, doesn't she? I've been neglecting her lately. My, how she gleams!

Eugene. [*Sits below angel.*] Papa, you were young when you got married, weren't you?

Gant. What?

Eugene. When did you get married?

Gant. It was thirty-one bitter years ago when your mother first came wriggling around that corner at me like a snake on her belly. . . .

Eugene. I don't mean Mama. How old were you when you were first married? To Cynthia?

Gant. By God, you better not let your mother hear you say that name!

Eugene. I want to know . . . how old were you?

Gant. Well, I must have been twenty-eight. Ah, Cynthia, Cynthia.

Eugene. You loved her, didn't you, Papa?

Gant. She had a real glowing beauty. Sweet, noble, proud, and yet soft, soft—she died in her bloom.

Eugene. She was older than you, wasn't she?

Gant. Yes. Ten years.

Eugene. Ten years! But it didn't make any difference, did it?

Gant. [*Confidingly.*] She was a skinny, mean, tubercular old hag who nearly drove me out of my mind!

Eugene. [*Shocked.*] Then why do you talk about her the way you do? To Mama?

Gant. Because I'm a bastard, Gene. I'm a bastard! [*LAURA enters, carrying a picnic basket, her mood somewhat restless.*] Say, isn't this a pretty little somebody looking for you?

Eugene. Laura!

Laura. Hello, Mr. Gant.

Gant. Hello!

Laura. Hello, Gene. So this is your shop!

Gant. This is a real pleasure. It's not often I see *smiling* people around here. Haven't you got fed up with our little resort, young lady?

Laura. I'm really just beginning to enjoy it here.

Gant. What do you find to enjoy about it?

Laura. Oh, the countryside is beautiful. Gene and I have had lots of pleasant walks in the hills.

Gant. Oh, so it's Gene who makes it pleasant for you, hey?

Eugene. [*Taking off his apron.*] Papa!

Gant. You're fond of Gene, aren't you?

Laura. He's very nice and intelligent.

Gant. Gene's a good boy—our best.

Laura. [*Looking around.*] My, isn't this place interesting? How did you happen to become a stonecutter, Mr. Gant?

[*EUGENE studies LAURA during this, sensing her evasiveness.*]

Gant. Well, I guess you'd call it a passion with some people. When I was a boy Gene's age, I happened to pass a shop something like

this. [*Of the angel.*] And this very angel was there. She's Carrara marble, from Italy. And as I looked at her smiling face, I felt more than anything in the world, I wanted to carve delicately with a chisel. It was as though, if I could do that, I could bring something of me out onto a piece of marble. Oh, the reminiscences of the old always bore the young.

Laura. No, they don't.

Gant. So I walked into that shop, and asked the stonecutter if I could become an apprentice. Well, I worked there for five years. When I left, I bought the angel. [*He looks at the angel with longing.*] I've hardly had her out of my sight since. I bet I've started twenty pieces of marble, but I've never been able to capture her. . . . I guess there's no use trying anymore. . . .

[*He becomes silent, morose. Sensitively, EUGENE touches his father's shoulder, looks at LAURA.*]

Eugene. Would you like to look around, Laura?

Laura. I'm afraid I'm bothering you at your work.

Gant. [*Looks at EUGENE, coming out of his distant thought and mood.*] No, no. Show her about, Gene. [*Suddenly, decisive.*] I have some other things I must do . . . [*Starts toward office, pauses.*] —though some people find looking at tombstones depressing. Still, we all come to them in the end. [*GANT exits.*]

Eugene. Why do you think you might be bothering me?

Laura. You are supposed to be working.

Eugene. You came here to see me. What's happened, Laura? Something's different today.

Laura. Oh, don't pay any attention to me. I just . . . I don't know.

Eugene. What's in the basket?

Laura. I asked Helen to pack us a picnic lunch.

Eugene. Good! Let's go!

Laura. [*Puts basket on marble slab.*] Not now.

Eugene. [*Puts his arm around her.*] What is it, Laura? What's the matter? Have I done something wrong?

Laura. [*Shakes her head.*] Gene, Helen knows about us! And your father too.

Eugene. I don't care—I want the whole world to know. [*Picks up basket.*] Here, let's go.

Laura. No. Let's not talk about it. [*Sits on stool, near slab.*] This is pretty marble. Where's it from?

Eugene. Laura, you don't give a damn where that marble came from!

Laura. [*Starts to cry.*] Oh, Gene, I'm so ashamed, so ashamed.

Eugene. [*Sits beside her on slab.*] Laura, my darling, what is it?

Laura. Gene, I lied to you—I'm twenty-three years old.

Eugene. Is that all?

Laura. You're not nineteen either. You're seventeen.

Eugene. I'm a thousand years old, all the love I've stored up for you.

[*Again puts his arms around her.*]

Laura. [*Struggling away.*] I'm an older woman. . . .

Eugene. In God's name, what does that have to do with us?

Laura. There have to be rules!

Eugene. Rules are made by jealous people. They make rules to love by so even those with no talent for it can at least pretend. We don't need rules. We don't have to pretend. Oh, Laura, my sweet, what we have is so beautiful, so rare . . . how often in life can you find it?

Laura. [*Escaping his arms, rises.*] Eugene, you're a young boy, a whole world just waiting for you.

Eugene. You are my world, Laura. You always will be. Don't let anything destroy us. Don't leave me alone. I've always been alone.

Laura. It's what you want, dear. It's what you'll always want. You couldn't stand anything else. You'd get so tired of me. You'll forget—you'll forget.

Eugene. I'll never forget. I won't live long enough. [*Takes her in his arms, kisses her.*] Will you forget?

Laura. [*As he holds her.*] Oh my darling, every word, every touch, how could I?

Eugene. Then nothing has changed. Has it? Has it?

Madame Elizabeth's Voice. [*Off.*] Good morning!

[*MADAME ELIZABETH, 38, the town madame, enters along the street. She is well clad, carries herself stylishly. She sees EUGENE and LAURA, stops. EUGENE and LAURA break from each other.*]

Eugene. Good morning, Madame Elizabeth.

Madame Elizabeth. Is Mr. Gant here?

Eugene. He's inside.

Madame Elizabeth. Well, don't let me keep you from what you're doing. [*Approaches office, calls.*] Mr. Gant!

[*LAURA and EUGENE exit into yard.*]

GANT, changed into a better pair of trousers, tying his tie, enters.]

Gant. Elizabeth, my dear Elizabeth! Well, this is a surprise!

[*Seizes her hands.*]

Madame Elizabeth. [*Sentimentally looking him over.*] Six years, W.O. Six years—except to nod to. Time, what a thief you are.

Gant. He hasn't stolen from you—you're still as handsome and stylish as ever. Won't you sit down?

Madame Elizabeth. Oh, W.O.—you and your gallant manners. But I'm no chicken any more, and no one knows it better than I do. If you only knew how often we talk about you up on Eagle Crescent. What a man you were! Wild! Bacchus himself. You remember the song you used to sing?

Gant. Life was many songs in those days, Elizabeth.

Madame Elizabeth. But when you got liquored up enough—don't you remember? Of course I can't boom it out like you do.

[*Sings, imitating GANT. GANT joins her.*]

"Up in that back room, boys,
Up in *that* back room,
All those kisses and those hugs,
Among the fleas and bugs.
In the evening's gloom, boys,
I pity your sad doom.
Up in that back room, boys,
Up in *that* back room."

[*They both laugh. GANT gives her an affectionate fanny-slap.*]

Gant. The loss of all that—that's the worst, Elizabeth.

Madame Elizabeth. [*Sitting on the bench.*] Oh, W.O., W.O.! We do miss you.

Gant. [*Joining her on the bench.*] How are all the girls, Elizabeth?

Madame Elizabeth. [*Suddenly distressed.*] That's what I came to see you about. I lost one of them last night.

[*Takes handkerchief from her pocket, quietly cries into it.*]

Gant. Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

Madame Elizabeth. Sick only three days. I'd have done anything in the world for her. A doctor and two trained nurses by her all the time.

Gant. Too bad. Too bad. Which one was it?

Madame Elizabeth. Since your time, W.O. We called her Lily.

Gant. Tch . . . tch . . . tch. Lily.

Madame Elizabeth. I couldn't have loved her more if she had been my own daughter. Twenty-two, a child, a mere child. And not

a relative who would do anything for her. Her mother died when she was thirteen, and her father is a mean old bastard who wouldn't even come to her deathbed.

Gant. He will be punished.

Madame Elizabeth. As sure as there's a God in heaven—the old bastard! I hope he rots! Such a fine girl, such a bright future for her. She had more opportunities than I ever had—and you know what I've done here. I'm a rich woman today, W.O. Why, not even your wife owns more property than I do. I beg your pardon—I hope you don't mind my speaking of her— [*GANT gestures to go right ahead.*] Mrs. Gant and I both understand that property is what makes a person hold one's head up! And Lily could have had all that too. Poor Lily! No one knows how much I'll miss her.

[*A moment's quiet. GANT is respecting her grief.*]

Gant. I suppose you'll be wanting something for her grave? [*As MADAME ELIZABETH nods, he rises.*] Here's a sweet lamb . . . couchant lamb, it's called. *Couchant* means lying-down in French. That should be appropriate.

Madame Elizabeth. No, I've already made up my mind. . . . [*Rises, moves toward the Carrara angel.*] I want that angel.

Gant. You don't want her, Elizabeth. Why, she's a white elephant. Nobody can afford to buy her!

Madame Elizabeth. I can and I want her.

Gant. My dear Elizabeth, I have other fine angels. What about this one? My own carving.

Madame Elizabeth. No. Ever since I first saw that angel, I thought, when somebody who means something to me goes, she's going to be on the grave.

Gant. That angel's not for sale, Elizabeth.

Madame Elizabeth. Then why should you have her out here?

Gant. The truth is, I've promised her to someone.

Madame Elizabeth. I'll buy her from whoever you promised and give them a profit. Cash on the line. Who did you sell it to?

Gant. My dear Madame Elizabeth. Here is a nice expensive Egyptian urn. Your beloved Lily would like that.

Madame Elizabeth. Egyptian urns—pah! Pea pots! I want the angel!

Gant. [*With growing intensity.*] It's not for sale! Anything you like . . . everything you like . . . I'll give it to you. . . . I'll make you a present, for old times' sake. But not my angel!

Madame Elizabeth. Now let's not waste any more time over this. How much, W.O.?

Gant. She's Carrara marble from Italy, and too good for any whore! [*He calls.*] Eugene . . . Eugene!

Madame Elizabeth. [*Furious.*] Why you old libertine, how dare you speak to me like that?

Eugene. [*Entering, with LAURA.*] What is it, father? What's the matter?

Madame Elizabeth. Your father's a stubborn old nut, that's what!

Gant. [*Crosses toward office, turns.*] I'm sorry if I've offended you.

Madame Elizabeth. You have, W.O., deeply!

Gant. Gene, will you be so kind and see if you can wait upon the Madame?

[*Exits into the inner room of the office.*]

Madame Elizabeth. I've heard the trouble your mother has with the old terror—now I believe it! All I'm asking is that he sells me that angel—for one of my dear girls who's gone—a dear, young girl in the flower of her life . . . [*Of LAURA.*] . . . like this young girl here.

Eugene. Madame Elizabeth, I believe Papa is saving that angel for his own grave.

Madame Elizabeth. [*Sits on bench.*] Oh-h-h, why didn't he say so? Why didn't he tell me? Poor, poor W.O. Well, of course in that case. . . . [*She partially recovers. To LAURA.*] If you were to think of your death, dear—if you can, I mean, and we never know, we never know—is there something here that would appeal to you?

Laura. [*Looks around.*] I like the little lamb.

Madame Elizabeth. Lambs are for children, aren't they?

Eugene. [*Stoops behind lamb.*] Lambs are for anybody. Put your hand on it. Feel it. [*He takes MADAME ELIZABETH's hand, strokes it across the lamb.*] Isn't it cool and content and restful? And you could have a poem engraved on the base.

Madame Elizabeth. A poem. . . .

Eugene. Let's see if we can find something you'd like. [*Picks up book.*] Here's a book of Fifty Fine Memorial Poems. [*MADAME ELIZABETH still strokes the lamb. EUGENE finds a poem.*] See if you like this. . . .

[*Reads.*]

"She went away in beauty's flower,
Before her youth was spent;
Ere life and love had lived their hour,
God called her and she went."

[*MADAME ELIZABETH sobs.*]

"Yet whispers faith upon the wind;
No grief to her was given.

She left your love and went to find

A greater one in heaven."

Madame Elizabeth. [Quoting, through her heartfelt tears.]

"She left your love and went to find

A greater one in heaven. . . ."

[Rises, addresses EUGENE.] I hope you never lose someone you love, boy. Well, let me know when the little lying-down lamb is ready.

[She nods with majestic dignity to LAURA, exits. WILL and ELIZA enter, look off in the direction taken by MADAME ELIZABETH.]

Eliza. Don't stare after her, Will! You know who that is. [To EUGENE.] Was that shameless woman here to see your father?

Eugene. One of the girls at Eagle Crescent died. She bought a monument.

Eliza. Oh she did! She bought one! Well, your father certainly has to deal with all kinds of people. Will, go in and tell Mr. Gant that we're here. [WILL exits. ELIZA looks at LAURA.] Oh, Miss James! It's five minutes to dinner time at Dixieland, and you know the rules about being late.

Eugene. [Crosses to pick up basket.] Laura and I are going on a picnic.

Eliza. Not now you're not. [To LAURA.] My dear, I want to talk privately to Mr. Gant—to Eugene, too, and I've asked Ben to join us.

Eugene. We've made plans, Mama.

Eliza. Son, this is a family conference.

Laura. Gene, please—I'll wait for you over at Woodruff's. Please.

[LAURA and EUGENE stroll off, whispering. WILL enters from office, paring his nails.]

Eliza. Is he in there?

Will. He's there. We've got him cornered.

[They chuckle. BEN, looking feverish and ill, enters.]

Ben. Hello, Uncle Will. Hello, Mama—you look like you just swallowed fifty or a hundred acres. What did you buy today?

Eliza. Now, Ben, it just happens that today we're selling—I hope we are anyway.

Ben. What's it all about?

Eliza. You just sit down there. I may not need you, but I want you to be here.

Ben. [Sits beneath the angel.] I hope it won't take long.

[GANT enters. He wears a coat of carefully brushed black wool, a tie, and carries his hat, which he leaves just inside the office.]

Gant. Good morning, Miss Eliza.

Eliza. My, how elegant! Aren't we burning a river this morning?

Gant. I heard you were out here, Miss Eliza. I so seldom have a visit from you!

[He gestures the tribute.]

Eliza. That's most gracious. You may all sit down now. Gene! Will! [EUGENE enters, sits. WILL sits on office step. GANT moves a chair center.] Now, Mr. Gant. . . .

Gant. [As he sits.] This isn't one of your temperance meetings?

Eliza. [A bit surprised.] Our private temperance problem—that's a part of it, yes. Mr. Gant, how old are you?

Gant. I've lost track.

Eliza. You're sixty years old in December. And if Dr. Maguire were here, he could tell you . . .

Gant. I've heard what Doc Maguire has to tell me. I shouldn't be lifting these marbles. I shouldn't be drinking liquor. I should take a nice, long rest.

Eliza. Then you save me a great deal of argument about that. Now, Gene. . . .

Eugene. Yes, Mama?

Eliza. You want to go to college, don't you?

Eugene. Very much.

Eliza. Well, I figure that four years at Chapel Hill will cost thirty-four hundred dollars—but of course you'll have to wait on tables. Otherwise it would be forty-four hundred dollars, which is ridiculous—at the moment we don't even have thirty-four hundred dollars.

Gant. Oh, for God's sake, get to the point, Miss Eliza. Have you got the papers from the bank?

Eliza. [Stands in front of him.] Why, what do you mean, what papers?

Gant. You know what I mean. Fish for them, woman! [Pointing to her bosom.] Go ahead, fish for them.

[ELIZA turns her back, from her bosom fishes out a large envelope. GANT laughs, a roaring bitter laugh, leaps up to EUGENE, who joins the laughter.]

Eliza. [Angrily.] What in the world are you two hyenas laughing at?

Gant. Oh, as you would say, Miss Eliza, that's a good one, that's a good one.

Eliza. Well, I am glad to see you in a good mood.

Gant. So the bank wants this little old lot, here? That's what you told me, didn't you? Though I can't for the life of me see why.

Will. There's a new business street going through here in a few months.

Gant. Let me see the check.

Eliza. [Takes check from envelope, hands

it to him.] Well, it's for twenty thousand dollars. Will had to guarantee it personally for me to bring it here. Did you ever see anything like it. Two-zero-comma-zero-zero-zero-decimal-zero-zero!

Gant. W. O. Gant. It seems to be in good order all right.

Eliza. Well, it is—and Will's looked over this deed, and it's all in order too, isn't it, Will? [*Hands the deed to GANT.*] Give me your pen, Will.

Will. [*Hands ELIZA the pen.*] And I just had it filled.

Gant. [*Examining the deed.*] This fine print . . . I really do need glasses.

Eliza. [*Puts pen on work table.*] You can trust Will. He's been all over it, Mr. Gant!

Gant. [*Looks at angel.*] What about the marble stock and the monuments?

Eliza. They's not included.

Eugene. Papa—the years you've spent here . . . all your fine work. Please don't give it up!

Eliza. Now, Gene, your father knows what he's doing.

Eugene. But he's such a fine stonecutter!

Gant. You think my work is fine, son?

Eugene. Isn't it, Ben?

[*GANT crosses down right into the marble yard, looking about.*]

Eliza. Your father knows his duty to all of us—and to himself.

Eugene. There isn't a cemetery in the state that isn't filled with his work—you can always recognize it. Clean, and pure, and beautiful. Why should he give it up?

Eliza. Why, law, I don't say he should give it up entirely. He can have another little shop further out of town!

Eugene. But he's too old to transplant now, Mama. This is his street. Everyone knows him here. People pass by. Mr. Jannadeau's shop next door, and Woodruff's across the way—all the people and places Papa knows!

Gant. And Tim Laughran's down the block!

Eliza. [*Crosses down to GANT.*] Oh, yes. That's another reason for getting rid of this place. Put yourself out of temptation's way, Mr. Gant.

Gant. [*Sits on slab.*] I certainly do love it here.

Eugene. Don't give it up, Papa!

Ben. What do you want to do to him, Mama?

Eliza. Now looky here—you are a fine stonecutter—why, haven't I always said so?

But it's time you rested. You want to live a long time, don't you?

[*Sits beside him on slab.*]

Gant. Well, sometimes I'm not sure.

Eliza. Well, you do—and I want you to live a long time—we all want to! People can talk about a short but sweet life, but we all want to live! Look at me, I'm fifty-seven years old. I've borne nine children, raised six of them, and worked hard all my life. I'd like to back up and rest a little myself. And we can, Mr. Gant. If you'll just sign that little slip of paper. I guarantee, in a year from now, you'll have completely forgotten this dingy, crooked, dusty yard. Won't he, Ben? Won't he? Ben!

Ben. Some people have trouble forgetting some things, Mama.

Eliza. Why pshaw, I'm going to see to it that he forgets it. I'll have time to look after you. Won't I, Mr. Gant?

Gant. You're right about one thing, Miss Eliza, that I can't dispute. You have worked hard. [*Rises, moves to center work table.*]

Eugene. Papa, please, don't do it.

[*GANT sits at work table, signs the deed. ELIZA crosses to him, picks it up.*]

Eliza. Thank you, Mr. Gant. Now the check. You know what I'm going to do? I'm going to plan a great, glorious celebration. [*Gives the deed to WILL, speaks to EUGENE.*] We'll ask your brother Luke to come home, if the Navy will let him out. And we'll invite Stevie, and Daisy and her husband, too, except if she brings those whiny children of hers. [*Notifies GANT just looking at the check.*] Turn it over, Mr. Gant. Sign it on the back.

Gant. Why do I have to sign it?

Eliza. Endorse it, that's all. W. O. Gant, like it's written on the front of the check.

Gant. That can wait until I offer it, can't it?

Eliza. To clear the check, Mr. Gant!

Gant. I'm not used to these things. How do you clear it?

Eliza. You sign it—I'll deposit it in the Dixieland account, then we draw checks on it.

Gant. We?

Eliza. Yes. You draw what you want. I'll draw what we need for Gene's college—for Dixieland, and for anything else we need.

Gant. [*Rises, crosses to office.*] I think I'll wait to cash it until I get to Chapel Hill. The bank has a branch there, doesn't it, Will?

[*Gives WILL his pen.*]

Eliza. Why would you want to cash it in Chapel Hill?

Gant. This is my check, isn't it? I'm the one who had the foresight to buy this little pie-cornered lot thirty-one years ago for four hundred dollars . . . money from the estate of Cynthia L. Gant, deceased. I guess I'm entitled to the profit.

Eliza. Now, Mr. Gant, if you're thinking to get my dander up . . .

Gant. [*Picks up hat, puts it on.*] Miss Eliza, I've been wanting to get away from here for a long time. I'm taking Gene with me. [*Crosses to EUGENE.*] I'm going to put him in that college there at Chapel Hill.

Eugene. Now?

Gant. Now! And then I'm going to travel . . . and when Gene's free in the summer, we'll travel together. [*Crosses back to ELIZA.*] And there's nothing in this whole wide world that you're going to do to stop me. And I can just see the word Dixieland forming on your cursed lips. What about Dixieland? Nothing for Dixieland? *No, not one God Damn red cent!* You've plenty of property of your own you can sell. If it's rest and comfort you really want, sell it, woman, sell it! But I think you like working hard, because then that makes us all feel sorry for you. And I do feel sorry for you too, from the bottom of my heart. [*Puts check in pocket.*] Well, Eugene?

Eugene. Papa, I can't go now.

Gant. Why not? You haven't got any better clothes . . . so you might as well go as you are. I guess we'll say our goodbyes. [*Addresses the angel.*] So long, dear Carrara angel. I'll arrange for us to be together again some day. [*Shakes hands with BEN.*] Good-bye, Ben— Tell Helen—tell Helen I'll write to her.

Eliza. [*Leaping at GANT.*] I won't let you do this. I won't let you.

Eugene. Mama!

Eliza. [*Seizes check from GANT'S pocket, tears it up, flings it on the ground.*] All right, all right, all right! There's your check. I guess there's nothing to prevent you from going to the bank and trying to get another check, but it won't work because I'm going to put an injunction against you. I'll prove you're not responsible to sell this property, or even to own it. I'll get guardianship over you! Everyone knows the times you've been to the cure—the threats you've made to me . . . the times you've tried to kill me—I'll tell them. You're a madman, Mr. Gant, a madman. You're not going to get away with this. I'll fight you tooth and nail, tooth and nail. And I'll win.

[*Trembling, she picks up her handbag from the stone seat.*]

Gant. All the things you've said about me are true, Eliza. I've only brought you pain. Why don't you let me go?

Eliza. Because you're my husband, Mr. Gant! You're my husband. Thirty-one years together and we'll go on—we must go on. A house divided against itself cannot stand. We must try to understand and love each other. We must try. . . . [*ELIZA exits.*]

Gant. [*Quietly.*] Take her home, will you, Will?

[*WILL hurries after ELIZA. A long moment. BEN, weak and feverish, dries his forehead with his handkerchief. GANT sinks into a chair.*]

Gant. Eugene, go over to Laughran's and get me a bottle. You heard me.

Eugene. No, Papa.

Gant. Are you still padding along after your mother?

Ben. Leave Gene alone. If you want to get sick, do it yourself.

Gant. Ungrateful sons! Oh, the sad waste of years, the red wound of all our mistakes.

[*GANT rises, exits. EUGENE looks after his father.*]

Ben. The fallen Titan. He might have succeeded if he hadn't tried to take you. He could still make it, but he won't try again.

Eugene. They loved each other once. They must have had one moment in time that was perfect. What happened? It frightens me, Ben. How can something so perfect turn into this torture?

Ben. They're strangers. They don't know each other. No one ever really comes to know anyone.

Eugene. That's not true. I know you—I know Laura.

Ben. Listen to him! No matter what arms may clasp us, what heart may warm us, what mouth may kiss us, we remain strangers. We never escape it. Never, never, never.

[*Closes eyes, leans back.*]
Eugene. Ben! Hey, Ben? [*Worriedly crosses down to BEN, feels his face.*] Ben, you're burning up! Come on . . . [*Tries to lift him.*] Put your arms around me. I'm going to take you home.

Ben. [*Sinks back.*] Can't. It's all right, I'm just tired.

Eugene. Why didn't you tell somebody you're sick, you crazy idiot!

[*EUGENE again tries to lift BEN.*]

Ben. To hell with them, Gene. To hell with them all. Don't give a damn for anything. Nothing gives a damn for you. There are a lot of bad days, there are a lot of good ones— [*EUGENE rushes into the office, picks up the telephone.*] that's all there is

. . . a lot of days. . . My God, is there no freedom on this earth?

Eugene. [*Into telephone.*] Get me Dr.

Maguire quickly. It's my brother Ben! Ben. [*Stirs, in anguish, looks up at the Carrara angel.*] And still you smile. . .

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE II

The Dixieland Boarding House. It is the next night; a painful tenseness grips the house.

[*LAURA and EUGENE sit together on the yard seat. MRS. PERT sits motionless in her rocker near the front door. HUGH slowly walks about. The inside hall is lighted, as is BEN'S room, which we see for the first time. There DR. MAGUIRE and HELEN are hovering over BEN'S still body. GANT is at the hall telephone.*]

Gant. [*Shouting into telephone.*] Second class seaman, Luke Gant. G-A-N-T—Gant! [*Angrily.*] I don't know why you can't hear me.

Hugh. [*Crosses to door.*] W.O., you don't have to shout because it's long distance.

Gant. Shut up, Hugh, I know what I'm doing. [*Into telephone.*] Do what? I am standing back from the telephone. All right, all right. . . [*Moves telephone away from him, lower.*] Can you hear me now? Of all the perversities. Very well, I will repeat. Yesterday I sent a telegram to my son, Luke Gant, to come home, that his brother Ben has pneumonia. Can you tell me if—oh, he did leave? Why didn't he let us know? All right! Thank you. Thank you very much.

[*Hangs up, joins the others on the veranda.*]

Hugh. They gave him leave?

Gant. If he made good connections he ought to be here by now.

Hugh. Ben'll be all right, W.O.

Gant. I remember when little Grover was ill in St. Louis, and Eliza sent for me. I didn't get there on time.

[*Sits on yard stool. ELIZA enters from the house.*]

Eliza. Did you reach him?

Gant. He's on his way.

Eliza. It's all nonsense, of course. Ben is far from dying. But you do like to dramatize, Mr. Gant. Still, it will be good to see Luke. . .

Eugene. [*Crosses to ELIZA.*] Mama, when can I see Ben?

Eliza. When the doctor says. I'll tell you what: when you go in there, don't make out like Ben is sick. Just make a big joke of it—laugh as big as you please—

Eugene. [*Groans.*] Mama!

Eliza. Well, it's the sick one's frame of mind that counts. I remember when I was teaching school in Hominy township, I had pneumonia. Nobody expected me to live, but I did. . . I got through it somehow. I remember one day I was sitting down—I reckon I was convalescing, as the fella says. Old Doc Fletcher had been there—and as he left I saw him shake his head at my cousin Sally. "Why, Eliza, what on earth," she says, just as soon as he had gone, "he tells me you're spitting up blood every time you cough; you've got consumption as sure as you live!" "Pshaw!" I said. I remember I was just determined to make a big joke of it. "I don't believe a word of it," I said. "Not one single word." And it was because I didn't believe it that I got well.

Gant. [*Quietly.*] Eliza, don't run on so.

Helen. [*Appears on veranda.*] The doctor says Mama can come in for a few minutes, but no one else yet.

Eugene. How is he?

Helen. You know Dr. Maguire. If you can get anything out of him. . .

[*ELIZA takes a big breath; she and HELEN go into house.*]

Gant. Oh God, I don't like the feel of it. I don't like the feel of it.

Ben. [*Weakly.*] Maguire, if you don't stop hanging over me I'll smother to death.

Maguire. [*To ELIZA and HELEN as they enter.*] With both of you in here soaking up oxygen, leave that door open.

[*ELIZA advances slowly to BEN, swallows a gasp at the sight of the tortured, wasted body. BEN'S eyes are closed.*]

Helen. Mama's here, Ben.

Eliza. [*Speaking as though to a baby.*] Why hello, son—did you think I wasn't ever coming in to see you?

Helen. [After a pause.] Ben, Mama's here.

Eliza. [To MAGUIRE.] Can't he talk? Why doesn't he look at me?

Maguire. Ben, you can hear what's going on, can't you?

Ben. [Quietly, his eyes still closed.] I wish you'd all get out and leave me alone.

Eliza. What kind of talk is that? You have to be looked after, son!

Ben. Then let Mrs. Pert look after me.

Helen. Ben!

Ben. Maguire, where's Fatty? I want to see Fatty.

Helen. Ben, how can you talk that way? Your mother and your sister! If it weren't for that woman you wouldn't be sick now. Drinking, carousing with her night after night—

Ben. [Yells with dwindling strength.] Fatty! Fatty!

[On the veranda, MRS. PERT stands quickly, then enters house.]

Helen. [To BEN.] You ought to be ashamed of yourself!

Dr. Maguire. Mrs. Gant, we need some more cold cloths. Why don't you . . .

Helen. [Angrily to MAGUIRE.] Fiend! Do you have to add to her misery? When you need something, ask me.

[ELIZA, starting out of BEN'S room, meets MRS. PERT in doorway. MRS. PERT hesitates.]

Dr. Maguire. That's all right, Mrs. Pert.

Ben. [Immediately turns toward her.] Fatty?

Dr. Maguire. Ben seems to want you here, that's all I care about. [To HELEN.] You'll be called if you're needed.

Helen. This is the last time you come into this house, Dr. Maguire!

[HELEN leaves the room. Outside BEN'S door ELIZA hands some cold cloths to HELEN. HELEN reenters BEN'S room, places them on the bureau.]

Ben. Fatty, stay by me. Sing to me. "A Baby's Prayer at Twilight" . . .

Fatty. [Sitting beside him.] Sh-h-h, Ben. Be quiet, dear. Save yourself.

Ben. Hold my hand, Fatty.

Fatty. [Takes his hand, sings.]

"Just a baby's prayer at twilight
When lights are low
A baby's years
Are filled with tears
Hmmm hmmm hmmm."

[Hearing the voice, EUGENE stands, looks up toward BEN'S room. HELEN and ELIZA appear on the veranda, HELEN comforting her mother.]

Eugene. How does he seem, Mama?

Eliza. He couldn't stand to see me worrying. That's what it was, you know. He couldn't stand to see me worrying about him.

Gant. [Groaning.] Oh Jesus, it's fearful—that this should be put on me, old and sick as I am—

Helen. [In blazing fury.] You shut your mouth this minute, you damned old man. I've spent my life taking care of you! Everything's been done for you—everything—and you'll be here when we're all gone . . . so don't let us hear anything about your sickness, you selfish old man—it makes me furious!

Dr. Maguire. [Appearing on veranda.] If any of you are interested, Ben is a little better.

Eugene. Thank God!

Helen. Ben is better? Why didn't you say so before?

Eliza. I could have told you! I could have told you! I had a feeling all along!

Dr. Maguire. [Crosses down steps.] I'll be back in a little while.

Gant. Well! We can all relax now.

Dr. Maguire. [Motions EUGENE away from the others.] Eugene, it's both lungs now. I can't tell them. But see to it that they stay around. I'm going next door and phone for some oxygen. It may ease it a little for him. It won't be long.

[He gives EUGENE a fond, strengthening touch, exits.]

Gant. What about Luke? Luke'll be furious when he finds out he came all this way for nothing!

Eliza. For nothing? You call Ben's getting well "for nothing"?

Gant. Oh, you know what I mean, Miss Eliza. I'm going to take a little nap.

Eliza. You're going to take a little nip, that's what you mean.

Gant. You can come up and search my room if you don't believe me.

[Exits into house. EUGENE stands, dazed and miserable. He forces himself during the following scene. JAKE and FLORRY enter from rear veranda.]

Eliza. [Excitedly.] Mr. Clatt, Miss Mangie—did you hear? Ben is getting better! The crisis is past!

Jake. We're so happy for you, Mrs. Gant.

Eliza. I knew all along—something told me. Oh, not that he didn't have a very high fever—I admit that—but my second sense . . .

Luke. [Off.] Hello—o—o there!

Eliza. [Peering off.] Luke! [Rushes down steps.] Luke! Luke Gant!

[The boarders melt into the background as LUKE GANT, wearing a Navy uniform, carrying a lightly packed duffle bag, enters. He is attractive, slight, lighted by an enormous love of humor and life, and adored by everyone. He is the son who got away early, but he still carries the marks of a distressing childhood; he stutters sometimes.]

Luke. Mama, Mama!

[Swings her around.]

Hugh. Well, if it isn't the sailor himself! How are you?

Luke. [Shaking hands with HUGH.] I'm fine, Hugh! How goes it?

Eliza. Aren't you going to kiss your old mother?

Luke. Old? You're getting younger and stronger by the minute.

[Kisses her.]

Eliza. I am, I am, son. I feel it—now that Ben's going to get well.

Luke. The old boy is better?

Helen. Luke!

Luke. Helen!

Helen. [Leaps into his arms.] How's my boy?

Luke. S-s-slick as a puppy's belly. I thought you all might need cheering up. I brought you some ice cream from Woodruff's!

[Gives carton of ice cream to HELEN.]

Helen. Naturally, you wouldn't be Luke Gant if you didn't!

Eugene. [Crosses to LUKE.] Welcome home, Luke!

Luke. [They shake hands.] My God, doesn't anybody buy you any clothes—and look at that hair. Mama, he looks like an orphan! Cut off those damn big feet of his, he'd go up in the air!

Eugene. How long have you got, Luke?

Luke. Can you s-s-stand me for twenty-four hours? [Sees LAURA.] Who's this?

Eliza. That's Miss James from Virginia. Laura, this is another of my sons, Luke Gant.

Laura. [Shaking hands.] How do you do, Mr. Gant?

Luke. How do you do?

Eliza. [Drawing LUKE away.] All right, just come along here, and behave yourself.

Helen. I'd better dish up the ice cream before it melts.

[Exits into house.]

Luke. [Calling after HELEN.] Maybe Ben would like some. I got pistachio especially for him.

Eliza. Tell your father the admiral is here!

Luke. Can I see Ben, now?

Eliza. Well, the truth is, that Mrs. Pert is in there with him now.

Luke. Mrs. Pert is?

[Looks at the others.]

Hugh. I wouldn't go into it, Luke. It's a somewhat "fraught" subject.

Luke. Oh boy, oh boy, I know what that is! Still the same old happy household?

[LUKE and ELIZA sit on the veranda edge.]

Eliza. Nonsense. I have nothing against the woman except she's getting too many ideas that she's a fixture here. First thing in the morning I'm going to ask her to move.

Luke. Doesn't she pay her rent?

Eliza. Oh, she pays it.

Luke. [Laughs.] Then you're never going to ask her to move—don't kid me! The paying customers are what count around here! Aren't they, Mama?

Eliza. Luke Gant, there are certain standards I have to keep up, for the reputation of Dixieland!

Luke. [Never unkindly.] What kind of standards? The old dope fiend who hung himself in the same bedroom where Ben had to sleep for eight years after he cut him down? And all those amateur femme fatales who bask under your protection here, way-laying us in the hall, the bathroom—Mama, we never had a s-s-safe moment! And people think you find out about life in the Navy!

Eliza. [Playfully.] I'm warning you, Luke! It's a good thing I know you're teasing.

[HELEN enters with plates, dishes up ice cream.]

Luke. Remember the early morning when Ben and Gene and I used to take the paper route together, remember, Gene? Old Ben used to make up stories for us about all the sleeping people in all the sleeping houses! He always used to throw the papers as lightly as he could because he hated to wake them. Remember, Gene?

Helen. And that book of baseball stories Ben used to read to us by the hour—what was it, Gene?

Eugene. [In tears.] You know me, Al, by Ring Lardner.

Eliza. [Leaping to EUGENE.] Eugene. Child, what is it? What is it!

[MRS. PERT enters hurriedly.]

Mrs. Pert. Mrs. Gant! Mrs. Gant!

Helen. What is it, Mrs. Pert?

Mrs. Pert. He can't get his breath!

Hugh. Gene, get the doctor!

[HELEN and ELIZA follow MRS. PERT into the house.]

Eliza. You ridiculous woman! The doctor said he was better.

[*EUGENE exits to get MAGUIRE. GANT enters through side door.*]

Gant. What the hell's all the commotion about? [*Sees LUKE.*] Luke! Welcome home!

Luke. [*As they shake hands.*] Papa—Ben's not doing so well.

Gant. Jesus, have mercy! That I should have to bear this in my old age. Not another one—first Grover, now Ben . . .

Luke. For God's sake, Papa, try to behave decently, for Ben's sake!

[*EUGENE and DOC MAGUIRE enter hurriedly.*]

Gant. [*Seizing the DOCTOR.*] Maguire, you got to save him—you got to save him.

[*MAGUIRE pushes past GANT into the house, enters BEN's room where the three women are gathered, MRS. PERT standing nearest BEN at the head of the bed.*]

Maguire. You women step back, give him air. [*Bends over BEN.*]

Gant. [*Collapsing onto the steps.*] When the old die, no one cares. But the young . . . the young . . .

Eugene. [*Sits beside him.*] I would care, Papa.

Ben. It's one way—to step out of—the photograph—isn't it, Fatty?

Fatty. Hush, Ben, don't say that!

Helen. [*To the DOCTOR.*] There must be something you can do!

Maguire. [*Straightens up.*] Not all the king's horses, not all the doctors in the world can help him now.

Helen. Have you tried everything? Everything?

Maguire. My dear girl! He's drowning! Drowning!

Eliza. [*In deep pain.*] Mrs. Pert, you're standing in my place . . .

[*MRS. PERT moves away. ELIZA steps close to BEN, sits.*]

Eliza. Ben—son.

[*She reaches to touch him. His head turns toward her, drops. There is a last rattling, drowning sound. BEN dies. MAGUIRE checks his heart.*]

Maguire. It's over. It's all over.

[*HELEN, racked, exits toward the veranda. MRS. PERT puts the socks she has been knitting at BEN's feet and exits upstairs. HELEN enters the veranda, tries to stifle her sobs.*]

Helen. He's gone. Ben's gone.

[*HELEN falls into EUGENE's arms. MAGUIRE, carrying his doctor's bag, ap-*

pears in the hall, puts a match to his chewed cigar.]

Eugene. [*Crossing up to DOCTOR.*] Did he say anything? Did he say anything at the end?

Maguire. What were you expecting him to say?

Eugene. I don't know. I just wondered.

Maguire. If he found what he was looking for? I doubt that, Gene! At least he didn't say anything.

[*EUGENE leaves and goes into BEN's room. MAGUIRE comes out onto the veranda.*]

Luke. How long have you known, Doc?

Maguire. For two days—from the beginning. Since I first saw him at three in the morning in the Uneeda Lunch with a cup of coffee in one hand and a cigarette in the other.

Gant. Was there nothing to be done?

Maguire. My dear, dear Gant, we can't turn back the days that have gone. We can't turn back to the hours when our lungs were sound, our blood hot, our bodies young. We are a flash of fire—a brain, a heart, a spirit. And we are three cents worth of lime and iron—which we cannot get back. [*He shakes his head.*] We can believe in the nothingness of life. We can believe in the nothingness of death, and of a life after death. But who can believe in the nothingness of Ben?

Helen. Come on, Papa, there's nothing more to sit up for. Let me put you to bed. Come along.

[*She takes the old man and leads him gently into the house, as the DOCTOR exits. HUGH and LUKE exit after HELEN and GANT. Only LAURA is left, still sitting on the yard seat. EUGENE, who has been standing in the corner in BEN's room, goes to his mother, who is holding BEN's hand tightly.*]

Eugene. Mama?

Eliza. He doesn't turn away from me any more.

Eugene. [*Takes her hand, tries gently to disengage BEN's.*] Mama, you've got to let go. You've got to let go, Mama!

[*ELIZA shakes her head, her rough clasp tightening. EUGENE leaves the room, comes out to the veranda. There, slowly, he sinks to his knees, prays. LAURA watches him, her heart going out to him.*]

Eugene. Whoever You are, be good to Ben tonight. Whoever you are, be good to Ben tonight . . . Whoever You are . . . be good to Ben tonight . . . be good to Ben tonight. . . .

ACT THREE

The Dixieland Boarding House. Two weeks later.

The house is seen in a soft early light. From offstage, a newsboy, whistling, throws four tightly wadded newspapers onto the veranda—plop—plop—plop—plop. The whistling and his steps fade away. The lights come up dimly in LAURA'S room.

[LAURA is in bed in her nightgown. EUGENE is at the foot of the bed by the window, looking out. He takes his shirt from the bedpost, puts it on.]

Laura. [Stirring.] Gene? What was that?

Eugene. Soaks Baker with the morning papers. Plop—plop—plop—plop—how I used to love that sound. Every time the heavy bag getting lighter. I'll always feel sorry for people who have to carry things. [Sighs.] It's getting light, it's nearly dawn.

Laura. Don't go yet.

[Reaches for his hand.]

Eugene. Do you think I want to on your last morning here? Mama gets up so early. Do you know that every morning before she cooks breakfast she visits Ben's grave?

[Sits on bed, takes her in his arms.]

Laura. Gene, Gene.

Eugene. Oh, Laura, I love you so. When I'm close to you like this, it's so natural. Are all men like me? Tell me.

Laura. I've told you I've never known anyone like you.

Eugene. But you have known men? It would be strange if you hadn't. A woman so beautiful, so loving. You make me feel like I only used to dream of feeling. I've hardly thought to daydream in weeks—except about us.

Laura. What did you use to dream?

Eugene. I always wanted to be the winner, the general, the spearhead of victory! Then, following that, I wanted to be loved. Victory and love! Unbeaten and beloved. And I am that now, truly! Laura, will you marry me?

Laura. [Moving away.] Oh darling!

Eugene. You knew I was going to ask you, didn't you? You knew I couldn't let you go even for a day.

Laura. Yes, I knew.

Eugene. You're happy with me. You know I make you happy. And I'm so complete with you. [He draws her back into his arms.] Do you know that three hundred dollars Ben left me? He would want me to use it for us. I'll go with you to Richmond

today. I'll meet your parents, so they won't think I'm an irresponsible fool who's stolen you. That may be a little hard to prove—but there is a job I can get. Would you mind living in Altamont?

Laura. I don't care where I live. Just keep holding me.

Eugene. I am going to have to tell Mama first.

Laura. Let's not worry about that now. Tell me about us.

Eugene. All the treasures the world has in store for us? We'll see and know them all . . . All the things and the places I've read about. There isn't a state in this country we won't know. The great names of Arizona, Texas, Colorado, California—we'll ride the freights to get there if we have to. And we'll go to Europe, and beyond . . . the cool, green land of Shakespeare, the gloomy forests of Gaul, the great Assyrian plains where Alexander feasted . . . the crumbling walls of Babylon, the palaces of the kings of Egypt, the towering white crags of Switzerland . . . My God, Laura, there might not be time enough for all!

Laura. There will be time enough, darling.

[They kiss longingly. From a far distance, they hear the whistle of a train as it passes.]

Eugene. The Richmond train leaves at noon. I'll have to get packed.

Laura. You do love trains, don't you?

Eugene. I love only you. Will you have confidence in me, the unbeaten and beloved?

Laura. Yes, darling, I will have confidence in you.

Eugene. I'll never have to sneak out of this room again.

[EUGENE rises, moves to the door. LAURA, on her knees, reaches toward him.]

Laura. Eugene! [He comes back to her.] I will love you always.

[They kiss. EUGENE exits. LAURA leaps from the bed, hurries after him.]

Laura. Gene!

[ELIZA has come out the side door. She takes flowers out of a bucket preparing to take them to BEN'S grave. EUGENE enters the hallway, lifts the phone receiver. He doesn't see ELIZA. Lights dim down on LAURA'S room as she dresses.]

Eugene. [Into telephone.] Good morning. 3-2 please. Hello, Uncle Will? This is Eugene. Yes, I know how early it is . . .

You know that position you offered me? I've decided to take it.

Eliza. [Pleased, to herself.] Well, can you imagine!

Eugene. [Into telephone.] I've thought it over, and that's what I'd like to do, for a while anyway. That's right. That's fine . . . Well, you see, I'm getting married . . . *[ELIZA freezes in pain.]* Yes, married—to Miss James. We're going to Richmond for a few days. We're leaving on the noon train. Thanks, Uncle Will. Thanks a lot.

[EUGENE hangs up. He starts to go back upstairs.]

Eliza. Eugene!

Eugene. [Coming out to her slowly.] Well, now—with your second sense, I thought you would have guessed it, Mama.

Eliza. First Grover, then Ben, now you . . . Why didn't I know, why didn't I see?

Eugene. I'm sorry, Mama, but we couldn't wait any longer.

Eliza. Gene, child, don't make this mistake. She's so much older than you. Don't throw yourself away, boy!

Eugene. Mama, there's no use arguing. Nothing you can say will change my mind.

Eliza. [Desperately.] And my plans for you? What of my plans for you?

Eugene. Mama, I don't want your plans, I've got my own life to live!

Eliza. But you don't know! Gene, listen, you know that Stumptown property of mine? I sold it just yesterday so you could go to Chapel Hill—— You know I've always wanted you to have an education. You can have it now, child, you can have it.

Eugene. It's too late, Mama, it's too late!

Eliza. Why law, child, it's never too late for anything! It's what Ben wanted, you know.

Eugene. Laura and I are leaving, Mama. I'm going up to get packed.

[He briefly kisses her, exits into house.]

Eliza. Gene! [ELIZA stands looking after him a moment, then quickly enters the hall, lifts the telephone receiver.] Three-two, please.

[HELEN enters from the kitchen with a broom. She sweeps the veranda.]

Helen. What are you calling Uncle Will so early for?

Eliza. [Into phone.] Will? No, no, I know—I heard . . . Yes, I know it's early . . . Listen, Will, I want you to do something for me. You know my Stumptown property? I want you to sell it . . . Now, this morning. Will, don't argue with me—I don't care what it's worth. Call Cash Rankin, he's been after me for weeks to

sell . . . Well, I know what I want to do—I'll explain it to you later—Just do what I say and let me know. *[She hangs up.]*

Helen. Well, it's never too early in the morning to turn a trade, is it? What are you selling?

Eliza. Some property I own.

Helen. Maybe you can put a little of that money into getting somebody else to help you at that altar of yours, the kitchen stove.

Eliza. Helen, get breakfast started, will you? I'll be in later. And if Gene comes down, keep him in there, will you?

Helen. Oh, all right. You let me know when I can let him out!

[Exits into house. ELIZA appears at door of LAURA'S room. LAURA is dressed and is packing her suitcase. ELIZA knocks.]

Laura. [As ELIZA enters.] Oh, Mrs. Gant. I've been expecting you. Come in.

Eliza. I should think you would.

Laura. Mrs. Gant, before you say anything . . .

Eliza. I'll vow, I can't believe a mature woman—at a time of trouble like this—would take advantage of a child, a mere child . . .

Laura. Mrs. Gant, will you please listen? Eliza. I will listen to nothing. You just pack your things and get out of this house. I should have known what you were from the first minute I set eyes on you . . . "I'm looking for a room, Mrs. Gant . . ." Why, butter wouldn't melt in your mouth . . .

Laura. [Slowly, distinctly.] Mrs. Gant, I am not marrying Eugene. I'm not. I wish with all my heart I could.

Eliza. You can't lie out of it. Gene just told me.

Laura. I am engaged to be married to a young man in Richmond.

Eliza. What kind of a wicked game are you playing with my child?

Laura. Mrs. Gant, this isn't easy. I should have told Gene long ago . . . but I didn't. A girl about to get married suddenly finds herself facing responsibilities. I never liked responsibilities. Gene knows how I am. I like music, I like to walk in the woods, I like . . . to dream. I know I'm older than Gene, but in many ways I'm younger. The thought of marriage frightened me. I told my fiancé I needed time to think it over. I fell in love with Eugene. I found the kind of romance I'd never known before, but I've also found that it isn't the answer. Gene is a wonderful boy, Mrs. Gant. He must go to college. He must have room to expand and grow, to find himself. He mustn't be tied

down at this point in his life. He needs the whole world to wander in—and I know now that I need a home, I need children—I need a husband. For people like me there are rules, very good rules for marriage and for happiness—and I've broken enough of them. I telephoned Philip last night. He's arriving at the depot on that early train. We're going on to Charleston together, and we'll be married there. He loves me, and I will love him too after a while. [*Takes note from desk.*] I left this note for Eugene. I couldn't just tell him. [*Gives it to ELIZA.*] Will you say goodbye to Mr. Gant for me, and tell him I hope he feels better? And my good-byes to Mr. Clatt and the others? And to Helen. Especially to Helen. She works so hard. [*Looks around.*] Goodbye, little room. I've been happy here. [*Picks up suitcase, faces ELIZA.*] Some day you're going to have to let him go, too. Goodbye, Mrs. Gant.

[*She exits. During the above HUGH has entered the veranda, is seated, reading the newspaper. LAURA enters from the house, looks back lingeringly, then, hearing the approaching train, hurries off toward the station. HELEN enters, drinking coffee.*]

Helen. Mama? Now where on earth? Hugh, have you seen Mama?

Hugh. Umph.

Helen. Do you know she was on the phone just now selling some property? Imagine—at this hour! And she leaves me to slave in the kitchen . . . Do you know where she is?

Hugh. You know, they don't advertise the good jobs in here, not the really big ones.

Gant. [*Entering in his suspenders, sleepily rubbing his jaw.*] Isn't breakfast ready yet?

Helen. Papa, how many times has Mama told you, you wait until the boarders have had theirs! And don't you dare appear in front of them in your suspenders, do you hear?

Gant. Merciful God! What a way to greet the day! [*He exits.*]

Helen. [*Calling after GANT.*] Papa, do you know where Mama is?

[*HELEN exits after GANT. EUGENE enters down stairs, carrying his suitcase, stops at LAURA'S door, knocks. ELIZA has just laid LAURA'S letter on the bed.*]

Eugene. Laura? Laura? [*EUGENE enters to ELIZA.*] Mama! Where's Laura? Where is she?

Eliza. She's gone.

Eugene. Gone? Where?

Eliza. She just walked out on you, child. Just walked out on you. [*Shakes her finger at him.*] I could have told you, the minute I laid eyes on her—

Eugene. [*Seizing ELIZA'S hand.*] You sent her away.

Eliza. I never did. She just walked out on you, child.

[*EUGENE breaks for the door. ELIZA picks up the letter, runs after him.*]

Eliza. Gene! Eugene! Wait!

Eugene. [*Runs down to the veranda.*] Laura . . . [*Looks up street.*] Laura . . . [*As HUGH points toward station, starts off that way.*] Laura . . .

Eliza. [*Entering, waving the letter.*] Wait! Wait! She left you this. Gene! [*EUGENE turns, sees the letter.*] She left you this. Read it, child.

[*EUGENE crosses to ELIZA, takes the letter, tears it open, reads it.*]

Eliza. You see, it's no use. It's no use.

[*EUGENE crosses slowly to the yard seat, sits. ELIZA watches him. HELEN enters through the front door.*]

Helen. Mama, there you are! Where have you been? We've got to start getting breakfast. [*As ELIZA waves her to silence.*] What's the matter?

Eliza. That Miss James. She and Eugene . . .

Helen. [*Laughs.*] Oh my God, Mama, have you just found out about that? What about it?

Eliza. She's gone.

Helen. What?

Eliza. She just walked out on him.

Helen. [*Crosses to EUGENE.*] Oh ho, so that's it, is it? Has your girl gone and left you, huh? Huh? [*Tickles his ribs. He turns, clasps her knees.*] Why, Gene, forget about it! You're only a kid yet. She's a grown woman.

Eliza. Helen's right. Why, child, I wouldn't let a girl get the best of me. She was just fooling you all the time, just leading you on, wasn't she, Helen?

Helen. You'll forget her in a week, Gene.

Eliza. Why, of course you will. Pshaw, this was just puppy love. Like the fellow says, there's plenty good fish in the sea as ever came out of it.

Helen. Cheer up, you're not the only man got fooled in his life!

Hugh. [*From behind his paper.*] By God, that's the truth!

[*HELEN and ELIZA glare at HUGH.*]

Eliza. Helen, go inside, I'll be in in a minute.

Helen. Oh, all right. Hugh, you come in and help me.

[HELEN exits, followed by HUGH.]

Eliza. [Sits beside EUGENE, his back still turned to her.] Gene. You know what I'd do if I were you? I'd just show her I was a good sport, that's what! I wouldn't let on to her that it affected me one bit. I'd write her just as big as you please and laugh about the whole thing.

Eugene. Oh, God, Mama, please, leave me alone, leave me alone!

Eliza. Why, I'd be ashamed to let any girl get my goat like that. When you get older, you'll just look back on this and laugh. You'll see. You'll be going to college next year, and you won't remember a thing about it. [EUGENE turns, looks at her.] I told you I'd sold that Stumptown property, and I have. This year's term has started already but next year . . .

Eugene. Mama, now! Now! I've wasted enough time!

Eliza. What are you talking about? Why you're a child yet, there's plenty of time yet . . .

Eliza. [Rises, walks about her.] Mama, Mama, what is it? What more do you want from me? Do you want to strangle and drown me completely? Do you want more string? Do you want me to collect more bottles? Tell me what you want! Do you want more property? Do you want the town? Is that it?

Eliza. Why, I don't know what you're talking about, boy. If I hadn't tried to accumulate a little something, none of you would have had a roof to call your own.

Eugene. A roof to call our own? Good God, I never had a bed to call my own! I never had a room to call my own! I never had a quilt to call my own that wasn't taken from me to warm the mob that rocks on that porch and grumbles.

Eliza. [Rises, looking for an escape.] Now you may sneer at the boarders if you like . . .

Eugene. No, I can't. There's not breath or strength enough in me to sneer at them all I like. Ever since I was this high, and you sent me to the store for the groceries, I used to think, this food is not for us—it's for them! Mama, making us wait until they've eaten, all these years—feeding us on their leftovers—do you know what it does to us—when it's you we wanted for us, you we needed for us. Why? Why?

Eliza. [Trembling.] They don't hurt me like the rest of you do—they wouldn't talk to me like you are, for one thing.

[Starts toward side door.]

Eugene. Because they don't care—they're strangers. They don't give a damn about you! They'll talk like this about you behind your back—I've heard them do that plenty!

Eliza. [Turns.] What? What? What kind of things do they say about me?

Eugene. What does it matter what they say—they say! Doesn't it matter to you what I say?

[Takes her in his arms, holds her.]

Eliza. [Beginning to weep.] I don't understand.

Eugene. [Releases her, moves away.] Oh it's easy to cry now, Mama, but it won't do you any good! I've done as much work for my wages as you deserve. I've given you fair value for your money, I thank you for nothing.

[Crosses up to veranda.]

Eliza. What's that? What are you saying!

Eugene. I said I thank you for nothing, but I take that back. Yes, I have a great deal to be thankful for. I give thanks for every hour of loneliness I've had here, for every dirty cell you ever gave me to sleep in, for the ten million hours of indifference, and for these two minutes of cheap advice.

Eliza. You will be punished if there's a just God in Heaven.

Eugene. Oh, there is! I'm sure there is! Because I have been punished. By God, I shall spend the rest of my life getting my heart back, healing and forgetting every scar you put upon me when I was a child. The first move I ever made after the cradle was to crawl for the door. And every move I ever made since has been an effort to escape. And now, at last I am free from all of you. And I shall get me some order out of this chaos. I shall find my way out of it yet, though it takes me twenty years more—alone.

Eliza. Gene! Gene, you're not leaving?

Eugene. Ah, you were not looking, were you? I've already gone.

[EUGENE exits into the house, into LAURA'S room, where he left his valise. He throws his body on the bed, stifles his crying. ELIZA sits on the veranda edge, stunned. GANT, wearing a vest over his suspenders, enters.]

Gant. Now do you suppose I can get some breakfast? [ELIZA doesn't answer.] Well, do you mind if I make a fire in the fireplace? [Goes to wood box, muttering.] If I can't get any food to keep me alive, I can get a little warmth out of this drafty barn! [Starts

collecting wood from box.] Some day I'm going to burn up this house—just pile in all the logs that old grate'll hold—and all the furniture—and all the wooden-headed people around here—and some kerosene—till this old barn takes off like a giant cinder blazing through the sky. That would show them—all fifteen miserable rooms—burning, blistering . . .

Eliza. I wish you would, Mr. Gant. I just wish you would.

Gant. You think I'm joking.

Eliza. No, I don't.

Gant. If I just get drunk enough, I will!

Eliza. [*Rises, faces house.*] Serve it right . . . miserable, unholy house!

Gant. Why, Miss Eliza!

Eliza. I'll do it myself—*[With demoniacal strength she shakes a newel post by the steps.]* I'll tear you down! I'll kill you, house, kill you! I'll shake you to pieces!

[Picks up MRS. PERT's rocker, crashes it.]

Helen. [*Entering hurriedly.*] Eliza Gant, have you gone mad!

Gant. Let me help you, Mrs. Gant! *[Drops wood, starts tearing at the other post.]* God-damned barn! Thief! Travesty on nature!

Eliza. God-damned barn!

[Kicks in latticed panels under the veranda.]

Helen. [*Calls inside.*] Hugh, come out here!

Will. [*Entering from rear of veranda.*] My God, what are they doing?

Gant. [*Screaming up at house.*] Clatt—Mangle—Brown—Come out of there, you rats, all of you—come out, come out, wherever you are!

[THE BOARDERS begin to yell and squeal from inside.]

Eliza. [*Hysterically, imitating GANT.*] Come out, come out, wherever you are!

Hugh. [*Entering.*] What's going on?

Gant. [*Breaking off the newel post.*] We're tearing down this murderous trap, that's what. Hand me the hatchet, Hugh. It's in the wood box.

Hugh. Fine! Fine!

[Dashes to woodbox, takes out hatchet.

THE BOARDERS enter down the stairs in various stages of undress.]

Miss Brown. Call the police.

Mrs. Clatt. Let's go to Mrs. Haskell's!

Jake. Gant's off his nut!

Gant. [*Chasing, threatening THE BOARDERS.*] Squeal, you croaking bastards. Croak and run! Run for your lives!

Boarders. [*Fleeing.*] The house is falling

down! It's a tornado! Ladies' Temperance Society, humph! Has anyone called the police?

Hugh. Here's the hatchet, W.O.

Gant. [*Leaping for it.*] Give it to me.

Will. Stop it, Gant—stop this! Have you all lost your minds?

Eliza. [*Throwing flower pot after THE BOARDERS.*] Go to Mrs. Haskell's!

Helen. Mama!

Gant. [*Brandishing hatchet at JAKE and MRS. CLATT as they exit.*] Look at 'em run! And they haven't even had breakfast. Run, scatterbrains, empty bellies!

Jake. I'll sue you for this, Gant, I'll sue you for this! [*Exits.*]

[MRS. SNOWDEN enters through front door. GANT whirls on her.]

Gant. So you don't like the food here? So you don't like my wife's coffee!

[MRS. SNOWDEN, screaming, hastily retreats.]

Eliza. [*Lifting a chair to hurl after THE BOARDERS.*] Why, law, that's good coffee!

[HELEN seizes ELIZA's arms, stops her. ELIZA's sensibilities slowly return.]

Gant. Look at 'em run! Oh, Miss Eliza, what a woman you are!

[GANT, roaring with laughter, crosses down to ELIZA, is about to embrace her, sees her sober, shocked face.]

Eliza. Mr. Gant, Mr. Gant, what have you done? What have you done?

Gant. What have I done? What have I—Merciful God, woman!

Eliza. Just look at this mess! And the boarders have all gone!

Helen. I don't know what got into you, Papa.

Gant. Merciful God! What got into me? Didn't she just stand there herself and . . .

Eliza. Helen, go get the boarders, tell them he's been drinking, tell them anything, but get them back!

Will. I never saw such an exhibition.

Eliza. Will, go with Helen. Tell them we all apologize. They'll listen to you. Hugh, help me clean up this mess.

[HELEN and WILL exit after THE BOARDERS.]

Gant. Let them go, Miss Eliza. Let the boarders go!

[ELIZA stands rigid. GANT waits anxiously.]

Eliza. I just don't know what came over me.

Gant. [*Crosses, flings the hatchet in the woodbox.*] Merciful God!

[EUGENE enters with his suitcase.]

Gant. Where are you going?

Eugene. I'm going to school at Chapel Hill, Papa.

Gant. You are? [*He looks at ELIZA.*]

Eugene. Mama promised me the money. She sold her Stumptown property.

Gant. Oh? By God, maybe it isn't going to be such a god-damned miserable day, after all! Got any money, son?

Eugene. I've got Ben's money. Thanks, Papa.

Gant. [*Takes money from his pocket, tucks it into EUGENE'S pocket.*] Well go, Gene. Go for both of us. Keep right on going.

Eugene. I will, Papa. Goodbye.

Gant. [*As they shake hands.*] Goodbye, Gene. [*Starts into house, turns.*] You're going to bust loose, boy—you're going to bust loose, all over this dreary planet!

[*GANT exits. ELIZA starts picking up the debris.*]

Eliza. I reckon you've made up your mind all right.

Eugene. Yes, Mama, I have.

Eliza. Well, I'll deposit the money in the Chapel Hill Bank for you. I tell you what! It looks mighty funny, though, that you can't just stay a day or two more with Ben gone and all. It seems you'll do anything to get away from me. That's all right, I know your mind's made up and I'm not complaining! It seems all I've ever been fit for around here is to cook and sew. That's all the use any of you have ever had for me . . .

Eugene. Mama, don't think you can work on my feelings here at the last minute.

Eliza. It seems I've hardly laid eyes on you all summer long . . . [*Replacing wood in woodbox.*] Well, when you get up there, you want to look up your Uncle Emerson and Aunt Lucy. Your Aunt Lucy took a great liking to you when they were down here, and when you're in a strange town it's mighty good sometimes to have someone you know. And say, when you see your Uncle Emerson, you might just tell him not to be surprised to

see me any time now. [*She nods pertly at him.*] I reckon I can pick right up and light out the same as the next fellow when I get ready. I'm not going to spend all my days slaving away for a lot of boarders—it don't pay. If I can turn a couple of trades here this fall, I just may start out to see the world like I always intended to. I was talking to Cash Rankin the other day . . . he said, "Why Mrs. Gant," he said, "if I had your head for figures, I'd be a rich man in . . ." [*Her talk drifts off. EUGENE stands looking at her. There is another terrible silence between them. She points at him with her finger, finally—her old loose masculine gesture.*] Here's the thing I'm going to do. You know that lot of mine on Sunset Terrace, right above Dick Webster's place? Well, I been thinking. If we started to build there right away, we could be in our own house by spring. I've been thinking about it a lot lately . . . [*There is another silence.*] I hate to see you go, son.

Eugene. Goodbye, Mama.

Eliza. Try to be happy, child, try to be a little more happy . . .

[*She turns and, with unsteady step, starts into the house.*]

Eugene. MAMA! [*He drops the valise, takes the steps in a single bound, catching ELIZA'S rough hands which she has held clasped across her body, drawing them to his breast.*] GOODBYE . . . GOODBYE . . . GOODBYE . . . MAMA . . .

Eliza. [*Holding him.*] Poor child . . . poor child . . . poor child. [*Huskily, faintly.*] We must try to love one another. [*Finally, EUGENE moves from ELIZA, picks up the valise as the lights start dimming, holding a spot on her. ELIZA seems to recede in the distance as into his memory.*] Now for Heaven's sake, spruce up, boy, spruce up! Throw your shoulders back! And smile, look pleasant! Let them know up there that you are somebody!

[*ELIZA'S voice fades. The set is black. A spot holds on EUGENE.*]

EPILOGUE

Ben's Voice. So you're finally going, Gene?

Eugene. Ben? Is that you, Ben?

Ben's Voice. Who did you think it was, you little idiot? Do you know why you're going, or are you just taking a ride on a train?

Eugene. I know. Of course I know why I'm going. There's nothing here for me. Ben, what really happens? Everything is going. Everything changes and passes away. Can you remember some of the things I do? I've already forgotten the old faces. I forget the names of people I knew for years.

I get their faces mixed. I get their heads stuck on other people's bodies. I think one man has said what another said. And I forget. There is something I have lost and can't remember.

Ben's Voice. The things you have forgotten and are trying to remember are the child that you were. He's gone, Gene, as I am gone. And will never return. No matter where you search for him, in a million streets, in a thousand cities.

Eugene. Then I'll search for an end to hunger, and the happy land!

Ben's Voice. Ah, there is no happy land. There is no end to hunger!

Eugene. Ben, help me! You must have an answer. Help me, and I won't go searching for it.

Ben's Voice. You little fool, what do you want to find out there?

Eugene. I want to find the world. Where is the world?

Ben's Voice. [*Fading.*] The world is nowhere, Gene . . .

Eugene. Ben, wait! Answer me!

Ben's Voice. The world is nowhere, no one, Gene. You are your world.

[*The train whistle sounds. Lights reveal Dixieland in dim silhouette.* EUGENE, without looking back, exits.]

CURTAIN



BIBLIOGRAPHY



GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Albright, H. D., and others, *Principles of Theatre Art*. 1955.
- Altman, George, and others, *Theater Pictorial*. 1953.
- Anderson, John, *The American Theatre*. 1938.
- Anderson, Maxwell, *The Essence of Tragedy*. 1939.
- Archer, William, *The Old Drama and the New*. 1923.
- Bahr, Hermann, *Expressionism*. 1925.
- Baker, Blanch M., *Theatre and Allied Arts*. 1952.
- Baker, George Pierce, *Dramatic Technique*. 1918.
- Beerbohm, Max, *Around Theatres*. 1928.
- Bellinger, Martha F., *A Short History of the Drama*. 1927.
- Bentley, Eric R., *In Search of Theater*. 1953.
- , *The Playwright as Thinker*. 1946.
- Block, Anita, *The Changing World in Plays and Theatre*. 1939.
- Blum, Daniel, *A Pictorial History of the American Theatre*. 1950.
- , *Great Stars of the American Stage*. 1951.
- Boyle, Walden P., *Central and Flexible Staging*. 1956.
- Bradshaw, Martha, ed., *Soviet Theaters 1917-1941*. 1954.
- Braun, Hanns, *Theater in Germany*. 1952.
- Brown, John Mason, *The Art of Playgoing*. 1936.
- , *The Modern Theatre in Revolt*. 1929.
- Burris-Meyer, Homer, and Cole, Edward C., *Scenery for the Theatre*. 1938.
- Chandler, Frank W., *Modern Continental Playwrights*. 1931.
- Charques, Richard D., *Footnotes to the Theatre*. 1938.
- Cheney, Sheldon, *Stage Decoration*. 1928.
- , *The Art Theatre*. 1925.
- , *The Theatre*. 1952.
- Clark, Barrett H., *European Theories of the Drama*. 1929.
- , and Freedley, George, eds., *A History of Modern Drama*. 1947.
- Clurman, Harold, *The Fervent Years*. 1945.
- Craig, Edward Gordon, *On the Art of the Theatre*. 1911.
- , *The Theatre—Advancing*. 1925.
- Dickinson, Thomas H., ed., *The Theatre in a Changing Europe*. 1937.
- , *An Outline of Contemporary Drama*. 1927.
- Dolman, John, Jr., *The Art of Acting*. 1949.
- , *The Art of Play Production*. 1946.
- Downer, Alan S., *Fifty Years of American Drama*. 1951.
- Downs, Harold, ed., *Theatre and Stage*. 1934.
- Drew, Elizabeth, *Discovering Drama*. 1937.
- Eaton, Walter Prichard, *The Theatre Guild*. 1929.
- Eliot, T. S., *Poetry and Drama*. 1951.
- Ellis-Fermor, Una M., *The Irish Dramatic Movement*. 1939.
- , *Frontiers of Drama*. 1945.
- Eustis, Morton, *Players at Work*. 1937.
- Fay, William G., and Carswell, Catherine, *The Days of the Abbey Theatre*. 1935.
- Fergusson, Francis, *The Idea of the Theatre*. 1949.
- Flanagan, Hallie, *Arena*. 1940.
- Flexner, Eleanor, *American Playwrights, 1918-1938*. 1938.
- Freedley, George, and Reeves, John A., *A History of the Theatre*. 1941.
- Fuchs, Theodore, *Stage Lighting*. 1929.
- Gagey, Edmond M., *Revolution in American Drama*. 1947.
- Gassner, John, *Masters of the Drama*. 1954.
- , *The Theatre in Our Times*. 1954.
- , *Form and Idea in Modern Theatre*. 1956.
- Granville-Barker, Harley, *Uses of the Drama*. 1945.
- , *The Study of Drama*. 1935.
- Gregor, Joseph, and Fülöp-Miller, René, *The Russian Theatre*. 1930.
- Gregory, Lady, *Journals*. 1946.
- Harris, Mark, *The Case for Tragedy*. 1932.
- Hartnoll, Phyllis, ed., *The Oxford Companion to the Theatre*. 1951.
- Henn, T. R., *The Harvest of Tragedy*. 1956.
- Hewitt, Barnard, *Art and Craft of Play Production*. 1940.
- Houghton, Norris, *Advance from Broadway*. 1941.
- , *Moscow Rehearsals*. 1936.
- Hughes, Glenn, *The Story of the Theatre*. 1929.
- , *A History of the American Theatre, 1700-1950*. 1951.
- Hume, Samuel J., and Fuerst, Walter Rene, *XXth Century Stage Decoration*. 1929.
- Isaacs, Edith J. R., ed., *Theatre*. 1927.
- Jones, Robert Edmond, *The Dramatic Imagination*. 1956.
- , *Drawings for the Theatre*. 1925.
- Komisarjevsky, Theodore, and Simonson, Lee, *Settings and Costumes of the Modern Stage*. 1933.
- Kraft, Irma, *Plays, Players, Playhouses*. 1928.
- Krutch, Joseph Wood, *The American Drama since 1918*. 1957.
- , *"Modernism" in Modern Drama*. 1953.
- Lamm, Martin, *Modern Drama*, tr. Elliott. 1952.
- Langner, Lawrence, *The Magic Curtain*. 1951.
- Laver, James, *Drama, Its Costume and Decor*. 1951.
- Lumley, Frederick, *Trends in 20th Century Drama*. 1956.
- McCleery, Albert, and Glick, Carl, *Curtains Going Up*. 1939.
- Macgowan, Kenneth, *Footlights across America*. 1929.
- and Melnitz, William, *The Living Stage*. 1955.
- Macleod, Joseph, *The New Soviet Theatre*. 1947.
- , *Soviet Theatre Sketch Book*. 1951.
- Malone, Andrew E., *The Irish Drama*. 1929.
- Mantle, Burns, *Contemporary American Playwrights*. 1938.
- Marshall, Norman, *The Other Theatre*. 1947.
- , *The Producer and the Play*. 1957.

- Miller, Anna Irene, *The Independent Theatre in Europe*. 1931.
- Morehouse, Ward, *Matinee Tomorrow*. 1949.
- Morris, Lloyd, *Curtain Time*. 1953.
- Moses, Montrose J., and Brown, John Mason, *The American Theatre as Seen by its Critics, 1752-1934*. 1934.
- Muller, Herbert J., *The Spirit of Tragedy*. 1956.
- Nathan, George Jean, *The Theatre in the Fifties*. 1953.
- Nemirovitch-Dantchenko, Vladimir I. *My Life in the Russian Theatre*. 1936.
- Nicoll, Allardyce, *The Development of the Theatre*. 1948.
- , *The English Theatre*. 1936.
- , *Film and Theatre*. 1936.
- , *World Drama*. 1950.
- Oenslager, Donald, *Scenery Then and Now*. 1936.
- O'Hara, F. H., and Bro, M. H., *Invitation to the Theatre*. 1951.
- Peacock, Ronald, *The Poet in the Theatre*. 1946.
- , *The Art of Drama*. 1956.
- Prideaux, Tom, *World Theatre in Pictures*. 1953.
- Quinn, Arthur H., *A History of American Drama*. 1943.
- Reynolds, Ernest, *Modern English Drama*. 1949.
- Robinson, Lennox, *Ireland's Abbey Theatre*. 1951.
- Samachson, Dorothy and Joseph, *Let's Meet the Theatre*. 1954.
- Saylor, Oliver M., *The Russian Theatre*. 1922.
- , *Revolt in the Arts*. 1930.
- , *Max Reinhardt and His Theatre*. 1924.
- Shaw, George Bernard, *Our Theatres in the Nineties*. 1932.
- Simonson, Lee, *The Art of Scenic Design*. 1950.
- , *Part of a Lifetime*. 1943.
- , *The Stage Is Set*. 1932.
- Smith, Hugh A., *Main Currents of Modern French Drama*. 1925.
- Stanislavsky on the Art of the Stage. 1950.
- Strong, L. A. G., *Common Sense about Drama*. 1937.
- Stuart, Donald C., *The Development of Dramatic Art*. 1928.
- Thompson, Alan R., *The Anatomy of Drama*. 1942.
- , *The Dry Mock*. 1948.
- Trewin, J. C., *Dramatists of Today*. 1953.
- , *The English Theatre*. 1948.
- , ed., *Theatre Programme*. 1954.
- , *The Theatre since 1900*. 1951.
- Waxman, Samuel M., *Antoine and the Théâtre Libre*. 1926.
- Whiting, Frank M., *An Introduction to the Theatre*. 1954.
- Whitman, Willson, *Bread and Circuses, a Study of the Federal Theatre*. 1937.
- Whitworth, Geoffrey A., *Theatre in Action*. 1938.
- Williams, Raymond, *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot*. 1952.
- , *Drama in Performance*. 1954.
- Wilson, A. E., *The Edwardian Theatre*. 1951.
- Worsley, T. C., *The Fugitive Art*. 1952.
- Young, Stark, *Theatre Practice*. 1926.

YEARBOOKS

- Chapman, John, ed., *The Best Plays of 1947-48, and subsequent years to 1951-52*.
- , ed., *Theatre '53, and subsequent years*.
- and Sherwood, Garrison P., eds., *The Best Plays of 1894-99*.
- Daniel Blum's *Theatre World, 1944-1945, and subsequent years*.
- Kronenberger, Louis, ed., *The Best Plays of 1952-53 and subsequent years*.
- Mantle, Burns, ed., *The Best Plays of 1919-20 and subsequent years to 1946-47*.
- and Sherwood, Garrison P., eds., *The Best Plays of 1899-1909, and The Best Plays of 1909-1919*.
- Nathan, George Jean, *The Theatre Book of the Year 1942-1943 to 1950-1951*.
- Stephens, Frances, ed., *Theatre World Annual, 1949-1950 and subsequent years*.

INDIVIDUAL BIBLIOGRAPHIES

(Titles listed in the General Bibliography are not repeated under Individual Bibliographies, nor are writings listed under an author's Writings on Drama.)

ANTON P. CHEKHOV

- Bentley, Eric, *What Is Theatre?* 1956.
 Bruford, W. H., *Chekhov and His Russia*. 1947.
 Chukovsky, K., *Chekhov the Man*. 1945.
 Hingley, Ronald, *Chekhov*. 1950.
 Magarshack, David, *Chekhov the Dramatist*. 1952.
 Perry, Henry Ten Eyck, *Masters of Dramatic Comedy*. 1939.
 Stanislavsky, K. S., *My Life in Art*. 1924.

THOMAS STEARNS ELIOT

- Brooks, Cleanth, ed., *Tragic Themes in Western Literature*. 1955.
 Fergusson, Francis, *The Human Image in Dramatic Literature*. 1957.
 Gardner, Helen Louise, *The Art of T. S. Eliot*. 1949.
 March, Richard, ed., *T. S. Eliot, a Symposium*. 1949.
 Prior, Moody E., *The Language of Tragedy*. 1947.
 Robins, Rossell Hope, *The T. S. Eliot Myth*. 1951.
 Smith, Grover, Jr., *T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays*. 1956.
 Unger, Leonard, ed., *T. S. Eliot, a Selected Critique*. 1948.
 Wilson, Frank, *Six Essays on the Development of T. S. Eliot*. 1948.

HENRIK IBSEN

- Bradbrook, M. C., *Ibsen the Norwegian*. 1946.
 Downs, Brian W., *Ibsen: the Intellectual Background*. 1946.
 ———, *A Study of Six Plays by Ibsen*. 1950.
 Jorgenson, Theodore, *Henrik Ibsen*. 1945.
 Koht, Halvdan, *The Life of Ibsen*. 1931.
 Northam, John, *Ibsen's Dramatic Method*. 1953.
 Shaw, Bernard, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*. 1913.
 Tennant, P. F. D., *Ibsen's Dramatic Technique*. 1948.
 Weigand, Hermann J., *The Modern Ibsen*. 1925.
 Zucker, A. E., *Ibsen, the Master Builder*. 1929.

WILLIAM INGE

- "Candidates for Prizes: Nine Younger Playwrights," *Vogue*, CXXIII (May 1, 1954), 134, 135.
 "Picnic's Provider," *The New Yorker*, XXIX (April 4, 1953), 24, 25.

"Schizophrenic Wonder," *Theatre Arts*, XXXIV (May 1950), 32-33.

FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA

- Barea, Arturo, *Lorca, the Poet and His People*. 1949.
 Campbell, Roy, *Lorca*. 1952.
 Honig, Edwin, *García Lorca*. 1944.

ARTHUR MILLER

- Bentley, Eric, *The Dramatic Event*. 1954.
 Miller, Arthur, "The University of Michigan," *Holiday*, XIV (Dec. 1953), 68-71, 128-43.
 Sievers, W. David, *Freud on Broadway*. 1955.
 Tynan, Kenneth, "American Blues," *Encounter*, II (May 1954), 13-19.
 Weales, Gerald, "Plays and Analysis," *The Commonwealth*, LXVI (July 12, 1957), 382-83.

SEAN O'CASEY

- Atkinson, Brooks, *Broadway Scrapbook*. 1947.
 Byrne, Dawson, *The Story of Ireland's National Theatre*. 1929.
 Koslow, Jules, *The Green and the Red; Sean O'Casey, the Man and His Plays*. 1950.
 Robinson, Lennox, ed., *The Irish Theatre*, 1939.

EUGENE O'NEILL

- Brown, John Mason, *Upstage*. 1930.
 Clark, Barrett H., *Eugene O'Neill, the Man and His Plays*. 1947.
 Dickinson, Thomas H., *Playwrights of the New American Theatre*. 1925.
 Eaton, Walter P., *The Drama in English*. 1930.
 Engel, Edwin A., *The Haunted Heroes of Eugene O'Neill*. 1953.
 Falk, Doris V., *Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension*. 1958.
 Gelb, Arthur, "O'Neill's Hopeless Hope for a Giant Cycle," *The New York Times*, September 28, 1958, II.1.2.
 Glaspell, Susan, *The Road to the Temple*. 1927.
 Hamilton, Clayton, *Conversations on Contemporary Dramatists*. 1924.
 Mickle, Alan D., *Studies on Six Plays of Eugene O'Neill*. 1929.
 O'Hara, Frank H., *Today in American Drama*. 1939.
 Sergeant, Elizabeth S., *Fire under the Andes*. 1927.
 Skinner, Richard D., *Eugene O'Neill*. 1935.
 Winther, Sophus K., *Eugene O'Neill*. 1934.

LUIGI PIRANDELLO

- Livingston, Arthur, Prefaces to *Three Plays by Pirandello and Each in His Own Way and Other Plays*. 1922 and 1924.

- MacClintock, Lander, *The Age of Pirandello*. 1951.
 Palmer, John, *Studies in the Contemporary Theatre*. 1927.
 Skinner, Richard D., *Our Changing Theatre*. 1931.
 Starkie, Walter, *Luigi Pirandello*. 1937.
 Vittorini, Domenico, *The Drama of Luigi Pirandello*. 1935.
 ———, *High Points in the History of Italian Literature*. 1958.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

- Bentley, Eric R., *Bernard Shaw*. 1947.
 Chesterton, G. K., *George Bernard Shaw*. 1909.
 Ellehaug, Martin, *The Position of Bernard Shaw in European Drama and Philosophy*. 1931.
 Ervine, St. John G., *Bernard Shaw, His Life, Work, and Friends*. 1956.
 Hamon, A., *The Twentieth-Century Molière: Bernard Shaw*. 1916.
 Henderson, Archibald, *George Bernard Shaw, Man of the Century*. 1956.
 ———, ed., *Table Talk of G.B.S.* 1925.
 Irvine, William, *The Universe of G.B.S.* 1949.
 Joad, C. E. M., *Shaw*. 1949.
 ———, ed., *Shaw and Society*. 1953.
 Kronenberger, Louis, ed., *George Bernard Shaw, a Critical Survey*. 1953.
 MacCarthy, Desmond, *Shaw*. 1951.
 Mander, Raymond, and Mitchenson, Joe, *Theatrical Companion to Shaw*. 1954.
 Nethercot, Arthur H., *Men and Supermen*. 1954.
 Patch, Blanch E., *Thirty Years with G.B.S.* 1951.
 Pearson, Hesketh, *G.B.S., a Full-length Portrait*. 1942.
 ———, *G.B.S., a Postscript*. 1950.
 Perry, Henry Ten Eyck, *Masters of Dramatic Comedy*. 1939.
 Rattray, Robert F., *Bernard Shaw, a Chronicle*. 1951.
 Shaw, Bernard, *16 Self Sketches*. 1949.
 Ward, A. C., *Bernard Shaw*. 1951.
 Winsten, S., ed., *G.B.S. 90*. 1946.

AUGUST STRINDBERG

- Björkman, Edwin A., *Prefaces to Plays by August Strindberg*. 1912-1917.
 Campbell, George A., *Strindberg*. 1933.
 Dahlström, C. E. W. L., *Strindberg's Dramatic Expressionism*. 1930.
 Henderson, Archibald, *European Dramatists*. 1916.
 Huneke, James, *Iconoclasts*. 1928.
 Lind-af-Hageby, Lizzy, *August Strindberg, the Spirit of Revolt*. 1913.
 ———, *August Strindberg*. 1928.
 McGill, Vivian J., *August Strindberg, the Bedevilled Viking*. 1930.
 Mortensen, B. M. E. and Downs, Brian W., *Strindberg*. 1949.

- Sprigge, Elizabeth, *The Strange Life of August Strindberg*. 1949.
 Uddgren, Carl G., *Strindberg the Man*. 1920.

J. M. SYNGE

- Bickley, Francis L., *Synge and the Irish Dramatic Movement*. 1912.
 Bourgeois, Maurice, *John Millington Synge and the Irish Theatre*. 1913.
 Boyd, Ernest A., *The Contemporary Drama of Ireland*. 1917.
 ———, *Ireland's Literary Renaissance*. 1916.
 Byrne, Dawson, *The Story of Ireland's National Theatre*. 1929.
 Howe, P. P., *John Millington Synge*. 1912.
 Masfield, John, *John M. Synge*. 1915.
 Moore, George, *Hail and Farewell*. 1914.
 Robinson, Lennox, ed., *The Irish Theatre*. 1939.
 Synge, Samuel, *Letters to My Daughter*. 1932.
 Yeats, W. B., *Synge and the Ireland of His Time*. 1911.
 ———, *Plays and Controversies*. 1923.
 ———, *Autobiography*. 1938.

OSCAR WILDE

- Mason, A. E. W., *Sir George Alexander and the St. James's Theatre*. 1935.
 Pearson, Hesketh, *Oscar Wilde, His Life and Wit*. 1946.
 Ransome, Arthur, *Oscar Wilde, a Critical Study*. 1923.
 Wilde, Oscar, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (four-act version). 1956.
 Winwar, Frances, *Oscar Wilde and the Yellow Nineties*. 1940.

THORNTON NIVEN WILDER

- Anon., "An Obliging Man," *Time*, LXI (Jan. 12, 1953), 44-49.
 Atkinson, Brooks, *Broadway Scrapbook*. 1947.
 Campbell, Joseph, and Robinson, Henry Morton, "The Skin of Whose Teeth?" *The Saturday Review of Literature*, XXV (Dec. 19, 1942), 3, 4; XXVI (Feb. 13, 1943), 16-19.
 Fergusson, Francis, *The Human Image in Dramatic Literature*. 1957.
 Firebaugh, Joseph J., "The Humanism of Thornton Wilder," *Pacific Spectator*, IV (Autumn 1950), 426-38.
 Guthrie, Tyrone, "The World of Thornton Wilder," *The New York Times Magazine* (Nov. 27, 1955), 26-27, 64, 66-68.
 Isaacs, Edith J. R., "Thornton Wilder in Person," *Theatre Arts*, XXVII (Jan. 1943), 21-30.
 Kohler, Dayton, "Thornton Wilder," *The English Journal* (college edition), XXVIII (Jan. 1939), 1-11.
 McCarthy, Mary, *Sights and Spectacles*. 1956.
 Sievers, W. David, *Freud on Broadway*. 1955.
 Wilson, Edmund, "The Antrobuses and the Earwickers," *The Nation*, CLVI (Jan. 30, 1943), 167-68.

THOMAS WOLFE AND KETTI FRINGS

Anon., "Pronounced Ket-tee," *The Saturday Evening Post*, CCXVI (Nov. 20, 1943), 4.

Muller, Herbert J., *Thomas Wolfe*. 1947.

Rubin, Louis D., *Thomas Wolfe, the Weather of His Youth*. 1955.

Watkins, Floyd C., *Thomas Wolfe's Characters*. 1957.

